How leaders matter: new approaches to understanding the role and effect of UK party leaders in general elections

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Peter Andersen.

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Abstract

Leaders of political parties are the most well-known and recognisable politicians in the UK. Party leaders dominate political coverage as the face of their party. Due to the level of attention that party leaders receive, voters can quickly evaluate leaders and these evaluations are widely assumed to provide part of the explanation for voter behaviour. Analysis in this thesis furthers the understanding of party leaders by examining leaders in three distinct contexts. I examine: long-term changes in voters' evaluations of leaders from 2014-2017; how significant leader effects were during the 2015 and 2017 general election campaigns; and how the role of leaders has been framed in the analysis of election outcomes presented in election night broadcasts since 1955.

This thesis progresses the study of leadership evaluations beyond the consideration of which leadership traits may be the most important, to consider the durability of voters' leadership evaluations over time. I investigate change in leadership evaluations in thirteen waves of the British Election Study (BES) Internet Panel that covers a three-year period. Results suggest that once voters' evaluations of party leaders become established, they remain remarkably stable thereafter. Furthermore, I find that voters distinguish between outgoing and incoming leaders of the same party, advancing arguments that leaders can appeal to voters independently from the party they lead, at least in the short-term. Evidence presented in this thesis also furthers the arguments that voters compare leaders of different parties when forming their evaluations.

I investigate leader effects on voter behaviour during the 2015 and 2017 UK general election campaigns. It is well-documented that leaders dominate contemporary campaigns, but it is less clear that leaders can affect vote choice during this period of frantic campaigning. I explore whether changes in leader evaluations during the campaign ultimately affect voters'

party choice. Changes to the evaluations of party leaders only have a marginal effect on most voters, as most voters predictably support a party that aligned with their pre-campaign attitudes. However, based on the analysis of pre-campaign attitudes, I identify a sizable group of voters whose vote choice is more strongly affected by changes to leader evaluations. These effects were found to be stronger on this group of voters in 2017, relative to 2015, where leadership evaluations also changed more dramatically over the campaign.

While researchers have increasingly recognised leader effects on voter behaviour, I investigate how leaders are used to explain election results in broadcasts and whether this reflects trends in the academic literature. I analyse each BBC election broadcast from 1955-2017, finding party leaders occupy a substantial proportion of discussion in modern programmes. Modern broadcasts of election results seek to explain the election outcome almost instantly after polls have closed and place leaders at the forefront of their coverage. Greater emphasis is placed on the campaign performance of party leaders when interpreting the results and speculation begins about the resignations of losing leaders. Participants in the broadcasts increasingly consider leaders to be responsible for election outcomes, especially when elections are understood to be 'winnable'.

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

Leaders of political parties are amongst the most recognised public figures in the UK. YouGov (2020) found that the top ten most well-known politicians are either current or former leaders of political parties. Forming an opinion about party leaders is an extension of a natural process used every day to evaluate people for a variety of reasons (Bittner 2011). In the modern media landscape, leaders personify the party they lead. Alongside achieving contemporary fame, UK party leaders are considered to be influential in the decisions made by voters. However, while we know that leaders matter, questions remain about whom they matter to and when they matter the most. Similarly, contextual factors surrounding specific elections, such as the competitiveness of the election, are likely to determine the size of leadership effects on vote choice.

Despite a large body of existing work that examines a wide range of potentially important leadership traits and characteristics, relatively little is known about the durability of voters' evaluations of leaders. Consequently, I examine whether leadership evaluations are stable over a three-year period and, if they do change, what could explain this. After investigating long-term changes in leadership evaluations, I consider the effect of short-term changes in leader evaluations during two general election campaigns. In particular, I examine whether party leaders have a pivotal role in convincing 'floating' voters. Lastly, I examine seventeen election night broadcasts to determine how party leaders are understood to have affected the outcome. Election night broadcasts offer a unique insight into how leaders are held accountable for election results, how this accountability has developed over time, and whether the level of accountability for leaders changes when elections are decisive or closely contested. Examining leaders in these distinctive contexts provides the opportunity to assess their role and the nature of leadership effects in different stages of the election cycle.

My investigation of party leaders takes advantage of methodological advancements enabled by longitudinal data. Longitudinal data continues to be rare in election studies. In particular, I utilise a thirteen-wave subset of a nineteen-wave internet panel from the British Election Study (BES). Using this data source provided an opportunity to examine party leaders with a wider set of statistical techniques and, critically, investigate individual-level change. Furthermore, I construct an original set of textual data from BBC election night broadcasts from 1955-2017, covering seventeen elections, providing an original dataset to analyse party leaders. As I outline later in this thesis, new approaches to data collection and the utilisation of panel studies are necessary to enable a greater understanding of party leaders.

My thesis makes three primary findings that relate to the role, effect and evaluations of party leaders. Firstly, I find voters' evaluations of leaders are mostly stable over time and find little evidence that suggests specific voter characteristics, theorised in the existing literature, lead to less stable evaluations of party leaders. The most substantial change in evaluations comes from new leadership, indicating that voters distinguish between predecessor and successor, and also distinguish between party and leader. New leaders can develop an appeal that is separate from their party and preceding leader. Additionally, evidence is found that, beyond new leadership, change in the leadership evaluations of one leader are associated with changes in evaluations about rival leaders. These results indicate that voters compare leaders of the main political parties when adjusting their evaluations. Secondly, I find that changes in leadership evaluations have a strong effect on convincing a sizable minority of persuadable voters during general election campaigns. Successful conversion of these voters could change the outcome of an election. My analysis illustrates the importance of first identifying which voters could be persuaded during the campaign, because most voters do not alter their vote choice during the campaign, before assessing the

impact of leaders. The level of change in evaluations can and does differ between campaigns, with the 2015 and 2017 elections illustrating differences in leadership effects. My third and final primary finding is that leaders have become a central part of election night broadcasts and are used to explain the unfolding election result. Over subsequent broadcasts, party leaders are increasingly highlighted when explaining election outcomes and their campaign activities are discussed at length. Election broadcasts from the 1980s to the present represent a distinctive shift in analysing the personal appeal of party leaders and attributing greater responsibility for the result to them.

Hypotheses and the Approach of this Thesis

Driven by existing theoretical debates regarding party leaders and facilitated by new methodological approaches, where prior studies have faced limitations, this thesis builds on existing research. Three hypotheses were developed to analyse party leaders, (1) *evaluations of party leaders will vary over time,* (2) *change in leadership evaluations during general election campaigns affects vote choice* and (3) *party leaders are central figures in the explanations of modern elections during election night*. These hypotheses are developed to understand the durability of leadership evaluations, effects of leadership evaluations on vote choice and how leaders are understood to have affected the outcome of elections during results programmes.

My first hypothesis investigates the stability of evaluations over time (2014-17) for the leaders of four political parties. Do certain characteristics of voters, such as being an 'unsophisticated' voter, not identifying with a political party, or consuming high levels of televised media lead to unstable evaluations? Each of the four political parties I examine changed their leader during the waves of this panel. I examine whether new incumbents have

a significant impact on changes in leadership evaluations, or if evaluations remain stable because newcomers lead the same party as outgoing leaders. In addition, I investigate whether changes in evaluations occur relatively as rival leaders operate in a highly comparative and competitive environment. My second hypothesis examines the influence of leadership evaluations on vote choice within the framework of campaign effects. I examine how accurately vote choice can be predicted in general elections, based on voters' pre-campaign attitudes, and assess if the inclusion of leadership evaluations results in greater accuracy. I determine that a substantial minority of voters are persuadable during campaigns. Changes in leadership evaluations during the campaign have a significant effect in convincing persuadable voters. The third and final hypothesis tests whether party leaders have become central to immediate explanations of election outcomes. I investigate how the discussion of party leaders has developed from early election night broadcasts in the 1950s into the twenty-first century. This hypothesis examines the amount of coverage given to party leaders and analyses whether leaders are considered to be responsible for their party's election result. Different aspects of party leaders are tracked in the coverage providing a detailed understanding of changes over time.

To test the hypotheses outlined above, I take advantage of opportunities provided by rich quantitative panel data and an original qualitative dataset. A detailed rationale is provided in the methodology chapter of this thesis, but it is worth outlining several important advantages here. Previous studies have highlighted the reliance on cross-sectional data when researching leaders. Longitudinal data has been identified as particularly useful for studying disputed aspects of leadership effects. The British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) is a unique source of information about party leaders. The number of waves that the panel runs for is unparalleled in national election studies and facilitates analysis of individual-level

changes, such as the evaluations of party leaders. The design of the BESIP enables several advanced methodological techniques to be used, such as multilevel models and machine learning approaches, thereby assisting to produce new contributions regarding party leaders. The number of respondents interviewed in the BESIP presents a further advantage, particularly when developing predictive models of vote choice where it is highly desirable to split the sample. Furthermore, the size of the BESIP provides considerable flexibility when investigating sub-sections of voters during Chapter Five. Data collection is primarily structured around two general elections, providing an excellent opportunity to examine campaign effects. A 'rolling thunder' research design within the campaign waves allows researchers to analyse the campaign on a daily basis. Taken altogether, these data and methods culminate in an original approach to the study of party leaders.

To complement the BESIP data, I use BBC election night transcripts to provide an original analysis on how party leaders are used to explain election results. The prominence of party leaders during general election campaigns (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013; Karvonen 2010) and how political parties can frame their campaign strategy around leaders (Bale and Webb 2018; Seawright 2013) has received noticeable attention in the literature. However, few studies have examined how party leaders are used when the outcome of elections is explained and interpreted. Previous studies have highlighted the richness of election night broadcast data (Lauerbach 2007; Marriott 2000; Schieß 2007) but have often been encumbered by difficulties in collecting and processing this data. Analysing election night broadcasts over time provides an opportunity to analyse trends over a substantial period of time. Additionally, analysing textual data from broadcasts provides the opportunity to examine different aspects of text that relate to leaders, such as, their campaign performance or the positive effect of their personality on the election outcome. A thematic analysis of

election night transcripts is conducted to provide an insight into how the discussion of leaders changes from the immediate post-war period to contemporary elections.

Contribution to the Study of Party Leaders

I confine the scope of my thesis to examining party leaders in the UK. Institutional factors in the UK provide party leaders with a heightened importance relative to other politicians, creating the conditions for strong leader effects. Leaders from the two largest parties have received greater attention from researchers examining leader effects because these leaders are the only realistic candidates for Prime Minister at each election (Blais 2013; Van Der Eijk and Franklin 2009; McAllister 2013). Institutional arrangements in the Westminster system include a formal opposition leader, affording significant resources to the party leader who holds this office and providing an important mechanism for holding the Prime Minister to account. These arrangements lead, in turn, to a natural tendency for voters to compare the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition when evaluating them individually (Mughan 2015). Yet, whilst there are good theoretical grounds to assume that voters evaluate leaders relatively, few empirical studies have demonstrated that British voters make such comparative evaluations (Mughan 2015). I widen the analysis by considering evaluations of Liberal Democrat and UKIP leaders, examining the importance of interactions between major and minor party leaders during a period when smaller political parties were growing in support (Bogdanor 2016). The share of the Conservative and Labour vote in general elections had continually declined since 1970, reaching 67.2% in the 2015 election, before strongly resurging to 82.4% in 2017 (Prosser 2018). Therefore, there is good reason to investigate which leaders are important to voters when they make their evaluations.

There has been thoughtful research on the importance of specific leadership traits that voters prioritise when assessing leaders (Bittner 2014; Clarke et al. 2004; Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2015; Goren 2007; Hayes 2005), but there has been little consideration about whether evaluations change over time. To investigate this issue, I examine the stability of voters' initial evaluations of party leaders. If voters solidify their evaluations of leaders relatively quickly, then the first impressions of party leaders would be pivotal to developing their electoral appeal. Investigation at the individual level is necessary to provide answers as to why evaluations change over time.

It is worthwhile investigating whether some sections of the electorate change their evaluations more dramatically than others. Some voters may change their opinions of leaders frequently, while others hold very fixed opinions. Three groups of voters who may be influenced more by party leaders are 'unsophisticated' voters (Clarke et al. 2009a; Gidengil 2013; Mughan 2015; Rico 2014), voters with no party identification (Barisione 2009; Blais 2013; Butler and Stokes 1974; Campbell et al. 1960; Rico 2014) and 'floating' voters (Bearnot and Schier 2012; Mayer 2007; Russo 2014). Voters that have these characteristics are considered to give greater emphasis to party leaders when making electoral choices. Voters who are not guided by party identity may change their opinions of leaders to a greater extent than partisans. This finding may be especially important as non-partisans now make up a greater section of the UK electorate than in the past (Mellon 2016; Mughan 2009). Researchers have often cited 'unsophisticated' voters as a group in the electorate that is reliant on leadership evaluations to make vote choices (Gidengil 2013; Rico 2014). Determining whether 'unsophisticated' voters with lower levels of political attention or political efficacy change their opinion of leaders would provide further evidence on this subject where researchers have come to divergent conclusions.

Modern election campaigns provide good conditions for leaders to have strong effects on vote choice. During contemporary general election campaigns, voters have an abundance of information to assess the performance and personality of leaders (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013; Karvonen 2010). The evaluation and performance of party leaders can be influential in three campaign effects: reinforcement, activation and conversion. However, the growth of 'late deciders' in the British electorate, may signal that conversion and activation have become more important because an increasing proportion of voters decide their vote late in the campaign (Fisher 2018; McAllister 2013; Russo 2014). In turn, leaders could play a bigger role in activating and converting voters during the campaign. While more voters may finalise their vote choice during a later stage of the campaign it does not necessarily mean all these individuals are persuadable. Using predictive models, I attempt to quantify the number of persuadable voters and determine the effect of party leaders on these voters. Understanding whether changing evaluations during the campaign effects vote choice for persuadable voters is an important contribution to research on party leaders.

The campaign is the final opportunity for leaders to affect the choices of voters but, how is the result understood on election night? I specifically examine how leaders are discussed in the immediate explanations that take place on election night. This analysis develops the wider understanding on the subject by examining the aspects of party leaders that are considered important, their perceived effect on vote choice and whether this mirrors the findings of academic research on leader effects (Clarke et al. 2016; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2013; Mughan 2009, 2015). The primary function of election night broadcasts is to present the results to viewers (Lauerbach 2013; Orr 2015; Ross and Joslyn 1988) but explanations of why parties won or lost inevitably follows. Previous attempts by researchers

to consider post-election narratives are by no means extensive, hindered by time consuming processing of textual data (Marriott 2000; Patterson 2003; Schieß 2007).

Election night dynamics have been highlighted in recent studies of UK elections (Cowley and Kavanagh 2016, 2018; Kavanagh and Cowley 2010) but the purpose of these texts is to provide a historical overview of the election. Narratives developed from post-election coverage of results are important in framing the initial understandings of the election result (Cathcart 1997; Hale 1993; Mendelsohn 1998). The immediacy of the broadcasts is important because explanations of the election are recognised long before detailed academic analysis is undertaken and published in series such as *Britain Votes* and the *Nuffield* election studies. I examine the perceived impact of leaders on voters by analysing broadcasts from seventeen general elections, examining how the focus on leaders changes over time and analysing the specific elections where leaders are considered to have a greater or lesser impact on the outcome. If elections are deemed 'winnable' there could be greater responsibility attributed to leaders for their party's failure or success.

There have been several methodological challenges in researching the importance of party leaders. One of the most persistent challenges to researchers examining party leaders is the difficulty in isolating the effect of leaders from other effects, in particular, from party identification (Costa Lobo 2014). There is considerable difficulty in achieving separation in practice, though researchers have used increasingly complex methods and quasi-experimental frameworks in order to achieve as much separation as possible (van Holsteyn and Andeweg 2010; Huber 2014). Concerns about how party identification is measured in the British electorate only add to the difficulty in separating partisanship from leadership evaluations (Bartle 1999; Clarke et al. 2009b). This thesis does not attempt to fully isolate leadership evaluations from other variables. True separation of these effects is unlikely to be

achieved in practice despite the application of increasingly complex statistical methods (Whiteley et al. 2016). Attempts to establish definitively which variable is the primary driver of vote choice is likely to oversimplify the inter-relationship between key variables and further nuances, such as the characteristics of voters (Bellucci, Garzia, and Lewis-Beck 2015; Garzia 2012; Whiteley et al. 2016).

To address this common issue in the research of party leader effects, the quantitative analysis in this thesis leans heavily on analysing individual-level changes in attitudes. Concentrating on the change in leader evaluations helps to disentangle evaluations from feelings towards political parties. Barisione (2009) highlighted the importance of complementing findings about party leaders gathered from cross-sectional analysis with qualitative, panel and multilevel techniques. Several studies have begun to take advantage of panel studies that enable an innovative analytical framework when examining party leaders (Berz 2020; Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019; Mellon et al. 2018). My thesis utilises panel data to explore party leaders by analysing the change in evaluations over time and the effect of these changes on vote choice.

Divergent conclusions over leadership effects have been drawn by researchers who often only examine a single election. Mughan and Aaldering (2018) have argued that most studies attempt to generalise findings beyond the specific context of a single election rather than within a particular country. The possibility of extending the analysis in this thesis to more elections and countries is limited by the availability of high-quality panel data. Analysis presented in this thesis directly compares the findings of campaign effects in the 2015 and 2017 general elections. Comparing effects in these two elections provides an opportunity to test the size of effects in different circumstances. Contextual factors relating to individual elections, such as policy differences between major parties, may reduce or increase the

effects that party leaders have in modern elections (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2013). Given that different party leaders fought the 2015 and 2017 UK general elections, and the elections were fought under different circumstances, the size of leader effects may be drastically different. Consideration of the wider political environment is crucial when drawing conclusions about the effect of leaders, especially as the context of an election can contribute to them having greater or lesser salience (Mughan and Aaldering 2018).

Structure of the Following Chapters

Chapter Two reviews the literature surrounding how voters formulate evaluations of party leaders, their impact on vote choice and the coverage they receive in the media. I outline explanations of how leadership evaluations are formed, the reasons why evaluations could be constructed relatively with rival party leaders, and which traits voters consider important when evaluating leaders. Theoretical explanations of the role of leaders on voter behaviour have evolved from a peripheral to an influential position, especially in the wider context of dealignment from political parties and reconsideration of the conceptualisation of partisanship. I examine how party leaders have come to dominate political coverage, especially during general election campaigns, and consider the potential impact of leaders within the literature of campaign effects. Next, I summarise previous attempts to analyse election night broadcasts, the uniqueness of the event, and its suitability for examining the role of leaders in explanations of election outcomes.

Chapter Three sets out the hypotheses of this thesis in detail and outlines the methodological choices made in order to test them. I explore each of these hypotheses in detail, explaining how they were developed from theoretical and empirical research. I detail the methodological approach taken to test these hypotheses and utilise the available data.

The unique opportunities for researching party leaders are provided by the BESIP and I present the benefits of analysing this data for this thesis. Moreover, I describe the process of compiling the original data set of election night transcripts and the approach to analysing this data. Methodological advancements provide opportunities to examine the effect of party leaders from alternative perspectives. I provide an overview of these methods and techniques in this chapter and reserve more technical discussion of individual methods for the Research Methods Appendix.

Chapter Four is the first empirical section of this thesis. Using thirteen waves of the BESIP, it examines how stable, or otherwise, leadership evaluations were during a turbulent period in British politics (2014-17), testing why evaluations were more or less likely to change. I analyse the stability of evaluations using path models. New leadership and general election campaign waves were theorised as events that could cause greater changes in evaluations. Results show that only new leadership has a significant impact. Furthermore, I examine whether leadership evaluations are made relatively, by testing whether changes in evaluations are associated with changes about other leaders. Relative effects are consistent in each case examined. I consider whether voter characteristics can explain the stability or fluidity of evaluations, concentrating on party identification, 'unsophisticated' voters and the consumption of televised political media. These effects are relatively weak but, contrary to expectations, there is some evidence to suggest that party identifiers are more likely than non-party identifiers to change their evaluations of leaders.

After examining the stability of leadership evaluations over a longer time period in Chapter Four, I focus in greater detail on short-term changes made during general election campaigns in Chapter Five. In this chapter I examine how evaluations of party leaders contribute to improvements in the accuracy of predictive models for Labour and Conservative

vote choice in the 2015 and 2017 general elections. Findings suggest the majority of voters' party choice is predictable before the campaign has begun and that feelings about party leaders are important in producing accurate predictions. Predictive models allow three campaign effects (reinforcement, activation and conversion) to be calculated and results show that reinforcement is the largest effect. It illustrates that the majority of voters do not change their vote choice during campaigns. The chapter then turns to focus on 'persuadable' voters and investigates whether changes in the evaluations of leaders during the campaign can influence this section of the electorate. Examination of values from predictive models help identify persuadable voters, whom I collectively term 'goldilocks' voters. Under further testing, I demonstrate how changes in leadership evaluations during the campaign are influential in explaining these voters' eventual vote choice.

The last empirical chapter considers the role of party leaders in election night broadcasts. I establish there has been a steady increase in the focus of leaders during broadcasts from 1955-2017. Leaders evolve from being rarely mentioned figures in early coverage, to headline characters in modern coverage where the contribution of leaders on the election results receives close attention. In addition to the overall level of coverage increasing over the time period, the subjects of discussion surrounding party leaders have changed too. Discussion and questioning of leaders shift towards evaluating their campaign performance, potential future leadership challenges and ultimately whether they are responsible for the election results. My analysis details how these themes progress over time, as party leaders feature heavily in the initial understanding of election outcomes.

My concluding chapter provides a summary of the key findings from this thesis and establishes the key contributions it makes to the theoretical and empirical understanding of

party leaders. I then discuss future opportunities to examine party leaders, based on the findings from this thesis, and outline some potential starting places for such work.

Chapter 2 : Reviewing the Literature on Leaders: Evaluations, Elections and Effects

Research on the subject of party leaders in the UK has been approached from a variety of angles, ranging from identifying the most important aspects or traits of party leaders to debates about whether leaders even influence voter behaviour. Leaders are naturally of keen interest to political scientists as the head and the public face of their parties. Leaders are naturally elevated because of their position, but even more so by the media environment they operate in. With this disproportionate level of coverage, it is unsurprising that leaders can evoke strong feelings from the electorate.

While most researchers would agree that voters have strong feelings about leaders, the issue of whether leaders influence the decisions of voters is more contentious. Early theories of voter behaviour argued the role of leadership evaluations was a peripheral issue for most voters (Butler and Stokes 1969, 1974). Instead, these scholars explained voter behaviour largely with reference to voters' partisan attachments to political parties and class identity (Butler and Stokes 1969; Pulzer 1968). Only in the absence of strong alignment to parties and clear ideological division would leaders be influential (Blais 2013; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2013). In contrast, the valence theory of voting places evaluations of leaders firmly at the centre of voters' personal electoral calculus (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009a; Whiteley et al. 2013). From this perspective, parties seeking to win elections require leaders who are judged to be competent by voters. In every UK election since 1983 the leader of the largest party had more favourable evaluations than the defeated leader. Party leaders have received greater attention when explaining the behaviour of voters, but significant questions remain about precisely who leaders are important to, and when leaders are important.

In this chapter I set out the building blocks for an examination of the role and effect of party leaders in the current political landscape. Through evaluating the literature on leaders, I establish a theoretical framework in this chapter that guides the subsequent empirical analysis. I begin by examining the role of party leaders in theoretical models of voter behaviour, before identifying structural developments in the electorate that prompted a reassessment of the role of leaders. Specifically, I discuss the effect of declining partisanship in the British electorate and how specific voter characteristics are considered to contribute to stronger leader effects. The process of how voters evaluate leaders is outlined, including which leadership traits are the most important and whether evaluations are made comparatively between rival leaders. I conclude from this discussion that leaders are unlikely to affect each voter in the same way. In the next section, I detail the role of UK leaders in modern general election campaigns, how campaign effects can be estimated and the potential influence of leaders on 'floating' or undecided voters. The penultimate section considers the role of election night broadcasts in establishing post-election narratives, including their importance in establishing political capital for leaders. I identify this event as an under-researched aspect of the electoral cycle. Finally, I evaluate and identify the methodological challenges researchers have faced when studying leader effects, explaining the limitations of using cross-sectional data to examine party leaders. My review of the relevant literature identifies aspects of leaders where new research would contribute to an improved understanding of their role and effect.

Three primary points are established in the following literature review. Firstly, there are conceptual challenges when investigating party leaders. Disentangling leaders from their party and establishing the direction of causality has proved cumbersome. I suggest panel data is particularly useful to researchers when dealing with these challenges. In addition, modern

election studies with large sample sizes facilitate the analysis of sub-sections of the electorate where party leaders may have a stronger effect. The literature review considers the reasons why it is unlikely that leaders would have a uniform effect on voters. Secondly, widening the timeframe for examining leaders beyond studying their effect using cross-sectional data from individual elections would be useful. Few studies have considered the dynamics of leadership effects over a substantial inter-election period and for multiple elections. Investigating individual-level changes in evaluations over the broader election cycle could identify voters who are most responsive to leaders and when changes in evaluations occur. Considering the post-election explanations for the outcome of elections can provide further insights on party leaders, particularly as data can be gathered retrospectively. Election night broadcasts provide an opportunity to establish political capital and shape the political narrative that explains election results. Thirdly, the availability of panel data has constricted previous efforts to investigate party leader effects. Many studies analysing the effect of leaders on vote choice reach conflicting conclusions because they rely on a single cross-sectional study. Post-election narratives are identified as a useful additional source to complement survey data but have rarely been utilised because of issues relating to processing large amounts of text. As a consequence, researchers examining post-election narratives rarely consider more than one election.

Party Leaders in Theories of Voting Behaviour and the Mitigating Effect of Party Identification

Early analyses of voting behaviour theorised that opinions of party leaders had little effect on voters, though more recent theories have placed greater emphasis on leaders. This section considers four theories of voter behaviour: the Michigan model, the sociological model, rational choice model and the valence model. I outline the role of party leaders in each

of these explanations of voter behaviour to consider how their importance has developed in different theories of vote choice.

The first models of voting behaviour were developed in the United States. In *The American Voter,* Campbell et al. (1960) emphasised the importance of long-term factors such as attachments to social groups and partisan identity in determining party choice. The theoretical approach derived from this work is widely labelled as the Michigan model because of the authors' association with the University of Michigan. Partisanship is a voter's psychological attachment to a party (Campbell et al. 1960). This psychological attachment is considered separate from both past voting history and being a registered supporter of a party (in the United States context) (Campbell et al. 1960; Hutchings and Jefferson 2018). Party identification provides voters with continuity when interpreting political events and is a cost-effective mechanism for making political choices (Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012). As such, partisan voters do not need to develop detailed ideological rationales to respond to political issues or events (Bowler 2018). Partisan attachment is considered a stable factor and highly influential on vote choice. Campbell et al. (1960) acknowledged that voters evaluate the personal attributes of presidential and congressional candidates images independently from the party they represent. Favourable opinions of Dwight Eisenhower from registered Democrats in both the 1952 and 1956 US Presidential elections, in a time of widespread Democratic partisanship, were identified as important to his electoral success (Campbell et al. 1960). However, the authors of the Michigan model conclude that evaluations of presidential candidates do not ultimately outweigh a voter's partisanship identity. While candidates change between elections, parties endure.

The first major national analysis of the behaviour of British voters was conducted by Butler and Stokes (1969, 1974), using data from the first British Election Study (BES) for the

1964 General Election. Previous studies of voter behaviour had focused on specific localities within the UK (specifically Bristol, Glossop and Greenwich) but were inherently limited by their research design and were therefore unable to generalise findings for the national electorate (Benney, Grey, and Pear 1956; Birch 1959; Milne and Mackenzie 1954, 1958). Butler and Stokes adopted several components of the Michigan model, to which Stokes had also contributed. In particular, they reached similar conclusions about the effects of long-term attachments, seeing these as central to understanding British voter behaviour (Butler and Stokes 1969, 1974).

In a period where most British voters were attached to parties and class, Butler and Stokes (1974, 1969) suggested that opinions of leaders were unlikely to have a major effect on most voters. An individual's party identification arises from a socialisation process. In essence, a voter's party identification is forged in childhood, as a by-product of the class and party identifications of their parents and strengthens as they move through adulthood. While 'short-term' influences, including feelings about leaders, are also accounted for, they are considered to be of relatively minor importance compared to the forces driving long-term alignment with political parties. Butler and Stokes' conclusion was that leaders were 'easily outweighed by other issues and events of concern to the public; including the movements of the economy' (Butler and Stokes 1974, 386). The potential of leader effects was considered by Butler and Stokes through isolating a small sub-section of voters in their sample who identified with one party but had more favourable opinions of a leader from a rival party. Party choice of these 'conflicted' voters was investigated further to see whether party identification or leadership evaluations was the dominant effect (Butler and Stokes 1974; Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012). Only 15% of 'conflicted' voters converted to a rival party where they evaluated the rival leader higher than their own (Butler and Stokes 1974, 367).

With some of this analysis conducted in the 1960s and 70s their approach was restricted to analysing a simple matrix, populated by a small sub-sample of voters. Nonetheless, their findings do illustrate the potential for party leaders to be impactful on some voters, even if this was a small number of voters in 1974 where the electorate was more strongly aligned to class and party identification.

Absence of strong attachment to political parties provides the opportunity for short-term influences, such as leader or candidate evaluations, to factor more heavily in voters' decisions regarding party choice. Socio-economic changes in Britain during the late twentieth century have challenged aspects of Butler and Stokes' theory of voter behaviour. Historically, the British electorate was strongly aligned with political parties and class identities (Butler and Stokes 1969; Pulzer 1968). In the 1960s 40% of the electorate were considered to have very strong attachments to political parties and as few as 10% of voters held no party identification (Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012). Recent studies suggest these figures have been inverted. Only 8% of the population strongly identified with a political party in 2018, but 39% of the population held no party identification (British Social Attitudes 2018). An electorate with a substantial number of non-partisans creates the potential for leaders to have larger effects on voters.

Dealignment from political parties and class identities is not confined to the UK and has been observed across electorates in Western Europe (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2015). However, it is important to consider whether voters could realign around new political issues. It has been suggested that Brexit may have provided a new ideological realignment in the electorate (Gamble 2018; Mellon et al. 2018). This implies voters' identifying as a 'remainer' or a 'leaver' could be more important to understanding their voting behaviour than their attachment to political parties. This argument of realignment around Brexit has been

challenged by other researchers who view the realignment as the product of wider and longer socio-economic changes in the UK rather than an immediate realignment following the 2016 EU referendum (Jennings and Stoker 2017). It is important to consider that other identities, in addition to party identification, may influence leader evaluations.

How researchers gather and measure levels of party identification presents additional problems. Party identification is often treated as a cause of voter behaviour rather than a consequence (Bartle 1999). An alternative perspective is that party identification is secondary to vote choice, with responses to questions that measure party identification simply reflecting an individual's vote intention. Researchers using cross-sectional election studies are unable to investigate the durability of partisanship over time. Multiple studies that examine panel data indicated that voters who hold durable, long-term attachment to parties are a smaller proportion of the electorate than it may appear when examining figures from cross-sectional data (Brynin and Sanders 1997; Clarke et al. 2009b). Brynin and Sanders (1997) found that 36% of the British Household Panel Study sample changed vote identification between 1991-1993. Furthermore, Brynin and Sanders found that after constructing separate models that explained vote choice and party identification, the two were 'virtually indistinguishable' (1997, 74). These findings are problematic for explanations of voting behaviour that consider partisanship as a durable voter characteristic and the theoretical understanding that voters' party identification is distinguishable from their vote choice. Findings about the durability of partisanship has implications for understanding leader effects because party identification is often considered the primary barrier to these effects occurring. Fluid attachments to political parties increase the possibility that leaders may influence voters' attachments to parties and be more susceptible to changing their evaluations of party leaders (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009a; Whiteley et al. 2013).

An additional issue in measuring party identification is how the questions are presented to survey respondents. The question that asks respondents about their party identification in the BES first introduced in 1964 was adapted from the party attachment question in the American National Election Survey. There is, invariably, a trade-off for researchers to consider when retaining longstanding survey questions that allow changes to be tracked over a long period of time. However, subtle differences in the British formulation of the question may lead to an overestimation in how many voters identify with a political party (Heath and Johns 2016). Unlike the American and Canadian version of the question, there is no prompt in the question for voters to identify as independents or non-identifiers (Blais et al. 2001). Attempts to measure partisanship using wording that provides a prompt for non-partisans suggest that data from the BES may drastically underestimate the percentage of non-partisans in the electorate (Blais et al. 2001; Brynin and Sanders 1997). Furthermore, Bartle raises the important point that questions about party identification follow vote intention or choice questions in the order of the BES survey, leading to the suggestion that voters are simply replicating their vote response (Bartle 1999). These arguments suggest the British electorate could have more fluid attachments to political parties. When responding to questions about party identification, voters may be more influenced by their current vote choice or evaluations of party leaders, rather than their 'attachment' to political parties. The absence of stable party identification under the Butler and Stokes model leads to greater opportunity of 'short-term' influences, such as party leaders to affect British voters.

Rational choice theories of voter behaviour place little emphasis on evaluations of candidates and leaders. Where scholars transfer economic theories of rational choice to the study of elections, voters are assumed to make calculated, informed decisions that weigh up

the costs and benefits of available parties (Dowding 2018). In essence, voters are expected to use their vote in the way that maximises the benefits, and minimizes the costs, to themselves (Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012). Voters assess the position of each party's economic policies, traditionally about the level of redistribution, to guide their vote choice. The rational choice model of voter behaviour works when there are economic differences between parties but does not work effectively with other cleavages in society.

Spatial models of British voter behaviour incorporate numerous cleavages in society beyond economics to explain voter behaviour. While Downs (1957) theorised that left-right ideology effectively encompassed the series of cleavages in society, other policy issues have been considered. Class, regionalism and occupation are all identified by McLean (1982) as being important to understand the positional issues of British parties. Voters are expected to support the party their views align with. Attempts have been made to incorporate voters' evaluations of party leaders into spatial models. Adams (2001) explains there will be some voters who will be motivated to vote for a party based on comparisons of competing party leaders, even when rival parties are more attractive on policy grounds. Spatial models of voter behaviour were particularly useful in Britain when there were clear ideological divisions and policy goals between the two major parties (Clarke et al. 2004). When major parties converge on the centre ground and voters recognise their similarity, they can lose votes to third parties (Green 2015). Spatial models may be effective when parties are distinctively different in policies offered to the electorate but are noticeably less effective when parties converge in the centre. In this way, voters may consider other factors to decide their vote choice when the majority of the electorate are broadly in agreement about policy outcomes.

Valence theory argues that vote choice is based upon the performance and competence of parties and leaders. Greater importance is attributed to performance when

parties and voters generally agree on the desirable outcomes of key issues, such as the provision of improved health care, but there are differences in how parties and candidates aim to achieve these goals (Dowding 2018). Political parties competing on valence issues can use a competent and trustworthy leader as one strategy to persuade voters that their party will deliver on policy goals and manage public services effectively (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2013). In addition, parties will be keen to emphasise valence issues that voters believe would be implemented successfully. Clarke et al. (2004) place the competence and performance of parties and leaders at the centre of their theory of voter behaviour. Clarke et al. (2004, 2009a) contend that voters are more irrational and impressionistic than is argued in rational choice models. Valence explanations of voter behaviour draw from psychological literature about heuristics. Heuristics are a mental shortcut, which in a political context, help voters avoid a costly procedure of gathering and processing substantial amounts of information in an intricate political world where events rapidly develop (Whiteley et al. 2013). Instead voters use general cues to assess whether political actors will perform well and deliver on salient issues (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009a). Heuristics enable voters to make electoral choices without having to engage with significant levels of information about competing political parties. As such, heuristics have been described as having a "less is more effect". Even if voters could access an abundance of information, doing so would be costly for the individual to process and would lead them to the same conclusion (Gigerenzer and Brighton 2011).

The valence model is not without criticism. Evans and Chzhen (2016) tested the assumptions of valence theory using longitudinal data with the purpose of establishing the direction of causality between party choice and key valence variables. Evans and Chzhen (2016) conclude that party and leader performance had no significant effect on vote choice. These findings were rebuffed from the principal authors of the valence model who argued

the criticism was invalid on both empirical and theoretical grounds (Whiteley et al. 2016). Whiteley et al. (2016) argue in the empirical test of the valence model conducted by Evans and Chzhen, they excluded key variables of leader images and voters' assessments of which party would be the 'best' at addressing their most important issue. These are two key indicators of performance that were absent from the model. Moreover, on theoretical grounds, they argue their valence model theorises a reciprocal relationship between several key variables, such as party identification and leadership evaluations. In other words, the valence variables identified by Whitely et al. (2016) are pieces of a puzzle that explain vote choice. A single piece of the puzzle will not provide an adequate explanation of vote choice.

The valence model places assessments of leaders at the centre of explaining voter behaviour, in contrast to other models that give little or no consideration to leaders. Proponents of the valence model argue 'How better, then, to crystallize one's view of a party than by making a judgement about the character and competence of its leader?' (Clarke et al. 2004, 9). Voters do not have to understand the process of how the party would achieve their policy goals, but would be confident that leaders would be effective in achieving these goals (Whiteley et al. 2013). The valence model suggests a stronger link between the evaluations of party leaders, performance of political parties and partisan identity. Clarke et al. (2009a) explain that their understanding of party identification fits with Fiorina's (1981) 'running tally' argument that party identification is an assessment of the performance of parties and their leaders. Whitely et al. (2013) outline that strength of partisanship differs within the electorate but do treat partisanship as a fixed independent variable. However, they differentiate that there are many strong and consistent party identifiers in the electorate, but others have more flexible attitudes to party identification.

Which Voters do Leaders Affect?

Party leaders are unlikely to have a uniform effect on the electorate. Researchers have theorised that specific subgroups of voters may be influenced more by leaders when deciding their vote. In this section I outline which groups of voters have received particular attention from scholars.

'Unsophisticated' voters is a term attributed to voters who use leader evaluations to decide their vote choice (Mughan 2015). Rico (2014) highlights that 'unsophisticated' has become linked with voting based on candidate evaluations or personality following some initial research on this subject in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960). Campbell et al. found that 20% of respondents in their 1956 survey did not comment upon any issues of policy but that 40% of this sub-group of voters did have an opinion on the presidential candidates. Although Campbell et al. (1960) do not label these individuals as unsophisticated, they found individuals in the group had lower levels of education relative to their wider sample. The connection between difficulty in understanding political events and processes, and voting based on how individuals feel about candidates or leaders was established. Voting based on policy concerns was seen as a sophisticated approach to making political decisions, while voting based on leaders was unsophisticated or irrational (Clarke et al. 2009a; Gidengil 2013; Rico 2014). However, mixed evidence has been found regarding a link between the sophistication of voters and leadership effects. Other studies have found that leaders are more important to those with high levels of political knowledge than those with lower levels (Gidengil 2013; Rico 2014; Whiteley et al. 2013). Voters with higher levels of political knowledge could give greater weight to leadership evaluations because they are conscious of how important leaders of government are. There is also no consensus on the direction of causality between voter sophistication and leadership evaluations. Do 'unsophisticated'

voters require leadership evaluations to make electoral decisions or do using leadership evaluations make a voter 'unsophisticated'? Whilst there is no conclusive link, 'unsophisticated' voters continue to be identified as a possible sub-section of the electorate that may be more greatly affected by leaders (Blais 2013; Mughan 2015).

Another group of voters that are considered more susceptible to leader effects are those who consume high levels of televised political coverage. Coverage of politics is thought to be increasingly personalised because of a greater focus on leaders (Mughan and Aaldering 2018). Focus on the activities of party leaders or their performance has come at the expense of policy discussion (Hayes 2009). Televised coverage is considered to be especially influential because leaders dominate this audio-visual medium. Even when news stories are not about party leaders, broadcasters often add visual images of party leaders in stories about their party (Mughan and Aaldering 2018). Contextually, UK broadcast media provide even greater coverage of leaders during election campaigns, offering voters easy access to an abundance of information about leaders (Gaber 2013). The introduction of televised debates between UK party leaders further contributes to election campaigns structured around these huge, leader-focused media spectacles (Deacon et al. 2017). Voters that consume televised political coverage, in contrast to other sources of news, give greater significance to party leaders because the information they consume is dominated by them (Lenz and Lawson 2011). While the disproportionate focus on party leaders observed by researchers provides good reason to investigate a relationship, the empirical evidence on whether consuming televised political coverage leads to greater leader effects remains inconclusive (Rico 2014). Further investigation might investigate whether voters with high consumption of television actually change their opinion of party leaders and that greater consumption does not simply reinforce existing views.

Party leaders are also theorised as having a greater effect on voters who do not identify with a political party. In the absence of attachment to a political party to guide vote choice, provides a greater opportunity for other factors, such as feelings about party leaders, to have a greater influence (Barisione 2009; Costa Lobo 2014). This rationale is consistent with the Michigan model and the conclusions of Butler and Stokes because the absence of partisanship provides greater opportunities for 'short-term' factors to affect voters (Butler and Stokes 1974; Campbell et al. 1960). Individuals without partisan attachments might consider greater political options and use their opinions about leaders to help guide their political decisions, especially when there are few clear policy differences between political parties (Blais 2013; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2013). This argument is particularly powerful within the valence model of voting, as leader evaluations offer voters a cost-effective heuristic for their vote choice (Clarke et al. 2004). British voters have become increasingly volatile over the last 50 years. Voters with weak or no party identification are more likely to vote for a different party in the next election than the previous election, compared to stronger partisans (Fieldhouse et al. 2020). Greater numbers of non-partisans in the electorate creates a more volatile electorate (Heath 2018) and also increases the potential for stronger leader effects on these voters. In other words, voters with weak or no party identification are more inconsistent with their political choice, opening up the possibility to be persuaded by leaders. Greater numbers of voters with either weak or no party identification create the conditions for more widespread leader effects.

What is Important About Leaders and When?

The potential impact of leaders is constrained by the institutional and electoral political system of a country, in addition to its current political setting (Blais 2013). For

instance, leaders are found to be more important to catch-all parties, as opposed to class-mass or denominational parties (Costa Lobo 2008). While voters in Westminster systems do not directly elect party leaders, they nevertheless create the conditions for strong leader effects. Westminster systems are structured around two main rival parties and thus only two leaders have a realistic chance of becoming Prime Minister (Curtice and Blais 2001; McAllister 2013). First-past-the-post helps squeeze smaller parties, with their leaders having effectively no chance of becoming Prime Minister. These dynamics intensify interest in the activities, performance and characteristics of the leaders of the two largest parties. Heavy exposure also carries risk for leaders because, whilst leaders can gain from the attention, they can also lose out from the intense focus if they perform badly. Both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have a considerable platform and resources to build support in anticipation of a general election (Van Der Eijk and Franklin 2009). Voters are aware that one of the leaders of the two largest parties will lead the next government, so evaluations of these leaders are the most important.

It is important to recognise that British voters are unlikely to evaluate leaders in isolation because the Westminster system pits the leaders of the two largest parties against each other. As such, voters are likely to make their evaluations about leaders relatively – between the two potential options for Prime Minister (Mughan 2015). Relative evaluations discussed in the psychology literature, but not in a political context, indicate that individuals are unlikely to make absolute evaluations and instead consider potential alternatives when forming assessments about other people (Goffin and Olson 2011). In this case, leaders may only need to 'beat what is in front of them'; they do not need to be a spectacular leader in their own right. Evidence of relative assessments from voters is not overwhelming but is an important consideration in understanding the impact of leader evaluations on voters.

Additionally, there has been little consideration of relative evaluations for the leaders of smaller parties in Britain. Leaders of smaller parties could be more important to voters deciding between voting for one of the two main parties and a minor party. It is also important to distinguish relative evaluations from negative effects arguments, where disliking leaders is considered more influential than liking a leader. However, there is minimal evidence to support this argument (Aarts and Blais 2011). Scholars have explained how voters judge leaders by how closely they fit their 'prototype' of an ideal leader, 'Generally, the more the candidate matches the ideal, the more positively he or she will be perceived by voters' (Bittner 2014, 58). Bean and Mughan (1989) have argued that judging leaders against an ideal set of qualities may not be generalisable beyond presidential systems, especially in Westminster systems where leaders are connected to the images of the party they lead. Additionally, it is reasonable to expect the most desirable qualities will differ between voters, and over time, as voters' priorities change between elections.

While voters make assessments of party leaders, leaders only have a limited time in office and when leaders change, voters must evaluate new leaders afresh. The impact of a party changing from one leader to another has been examined in a variety of ways. Often studies examine differences in policy and performance between the predecessor and the new leader (Bynander and 't Hart 2006; Foley 2009; Harmel et al. 1995; Worthy and Bennister 2020). Leaders are often replaced when they fail to take their party into government or keep them in government (Andrews and Jackman 2008), a tendency that is even more likely to occur in Westminster systems (So 2018). Occasionally, new leaders become both leader of their party and Prime Minister. Worthy (2016; Worthy and Bennister 2020) examines these cases and identifies that 'take-over' prime ministers on average have less time in power, often fail to win re-election and are more likely to lead a divided party. The circumstances in which

individuals become party leaders could therefore be influential in how voters assess their suitability to hold office.

Few studies have investigated the effect that leadership change has on the electorate (Brown 1992; Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019; Stewart and Carty 1993). Older studies have been constrained because high-quality data that captures leadership change and its effect on voters was unavailable. For example Brown's (1992) study relies on cross-sectional data from private polling companies to determine whether the change from Thatcher to Major had an observable effect on Conservative vote intention. Panel data provides an opportunity to investigate the individual-level changes of voters. Johnston, Hartman and Pattie (2019) utilise panel data to analyse differences in voters' evaluations between old and new leaders of the same party. Differences in evaluations are then used to explain voter behaviour at the 2017 General Election. Other studies have examined how new leaders provide an opportunity for voters to re-evaluate the left-right ideological positions of political parties and reaffirm or change their vote choice (Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu 2019). Investigating the effect of leadership change on individual-level evaluations provides an opportunity to examine whether leadership evaluations are conditioned by attachment to the political party they lead. The extent to which leadership change is recognised by electors, and affects their evaluations, could provide greater insights into how voters construct their evaluations of party leaders.

Academics have sought to establish which leadership traits are the most important to voters (Huber 2014; Shephard and Johns 2008). Personality and competency are two umbrella terms that have dominated investigations into which traits matter the most. Generally, personality traits capture the character of the leader, whereas competency traits capture the performance of leaders. However, there is no consensus on the terminology

intended to capture the different dimensions of the leader, and the national election surveys across Western Europe use a variety of terms to capture assessments of these two traits (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2015). For example, Costa and Ferreira Da Silva (2015) classify a range of personality traits under the umbrella term of 'warmth' toward leaders. Evaluations of personality can be made relatively quickly and instinctively by voters. Quick evaluations are possible because voters are likely to assess leaders by an instinctive method, the same process they use to judge people 'everyday' (Capelos 2010). On the other hand, Clarke et al (2004, 2009a) suggest that competence is the most significant criterion for party leaders because voters want a government that can deliver on their policy agenda. Voters may be less concerned about the personality of a Prime Minister when a government is managing the country effectively. It is worth considering that the importance of specific traits may vary between voters. Leaders that score highly on 'emotional' personality traits were most relevant in explaining voter behaviour (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2015). However, other studies have found that more favourable assessments of competence were specifically more important in explaining vote choice for right-wing parties (Bittner 2011). Analysis continues on identifying the underlying traits of party leaders that are most important to voters.

Other contextual factors are important when analysing voters' party leader evaluations. The connection to the party being led can affect which traits are important to voters. Evaluations are affected by the relationship of the leader and their party, leading voters to assess the traits of leaders based on stereotypical associations from the party they lead (Bittner 2014; Goren 2007; Hayes 2005). For example, presidential candidates for the US Democratic Party are conventionally associated with compassion and empathy, while Republican presidential candidates are typically considered stronger leaders (Hayes 2005). Associations between party images and their leaders are likely to be stronger in Britain with

no directly elected executive. Whilst their study focused on MPs rather than party leaders, Johns and Shephard (2007) found evidence of gender stereotyping of candidates when constructing evaluations. Findings suggested that female MPs were considered 'warmer' and male MPs were considered to be 'stronger' and that differences in gender evaluations were consistent when controlling for partisanship (Johns and Shephard 2007). Therefore, how voters assess specific leadership traits could be influenced by the gender of party leaders and stereotypical associations with the party they lead.

Research into the effect of different traits in the UK has been constrained by the availability of data on this subject. British Election Study (BES) Internet Panel survey data from 2014-17 includes only one explicit question that evaluates leaders for each wave of the study, asking respondents how much they like or dislike a leader (British Election Study 2018). Previous iterations of BES, such as the 2010 British Election Study internet panel (British Election Study 2010) included questioning respondents about a range of leadership traits, including 'competency', 'trust' and 'responsiveness'. However, these specific traits have only been included sporadically in the latest version of the study that began in 2014. The omission of these variables is likely due to the transfer of the leadership of the BES from the University of Essex and University of Texas at Dallas to the universities of Manchester, Oxford and Nottingham for the 2015 election. Exploring the importance of traits beyond those listed in the BES can be done by using an experimental framework, which allows researchers to determine the specific traits that respondents are asked about when evaluating candidates (Johns and Shephard 2007; Shephard and Johns 2008). Furthermore, researchers have demonstrated that like-dislike evaluations of party leaders effectively provide a summary of individual attributes (Clarke et al. 2009a; Whiteley et al. 2013). Clarke et al. (2016) have demonstrated like-dislike evaluations of leaders are the most powerful individual predictor

of vote intention, signalling that like-dislike evaluations are very useful to researchers. Clarke et al. (2009a) explain respondents' evaluations of specific traits were unlikely to differ substantially from general assessments of likeability.

Whilst the like-dislike evaluations may be effective summaries, the omission of questions about specific leadership traits means that it is difficult to investigate whether some leadership traits have become more important in recent elections. For example, studies of the 2005 UK General Election present more nuanced explanations of leader effects, pointing to the trustworthiness of Tony Blair being more important than other traits in 2005 (Evans and Andersen 2005; Stevens and Karp 2012). Both sets of findings suggested that specific leadership traits can gain or lose salience due to the contextual factors in an election. Following the 2003 war in Iraq and the 2009 MPs expenses scandal, the integrity and responsiveness of leaders was considered to be more important than their knowledge or competence (Stevens, Karp, and Hodgson 2011). Reliance on like-dislike evaluations within the current BES framework has not dampened the analysis of leader effects in the UK but does limit the possibilities of research (Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019; Mellon et al. 2018).

Understanding Campaign Effects and Party Leaders During General Election Campaigns

Campaigns aim to mobilize potential voters, particularly those sympathetic to a party's or candidate's beliefs and values (Schmitt-Beck 2007). During election campaigns voters become more knowledgeable about politics, even if exposure to campaign activity is brief (Norris and Sanders 2003). Election campaigns provide opportunities for parties to maximise their vote while media focus on their activities is heightened. However, early models of voting behaviour in the US and Britain suggested that election campaigns were unlikely to change

the outcome of elections (Butler and Stokes 1974; Campbell et al. 1960; Lasarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948; Schmitt-Beck 2007). With voters guided by strong attachments to political parties, campaigns were considered to have little chance of changing the choices of many voters. Some scholars even described campaigns as 'more like end-games at chess, putting the final touches on a predictable outcome' (Harrop and Miller 1987, 228). In other words, campaign efforts simply funnel the vote in a predictable direction.

Theories of campaign effects have developed from the US literature on this subject. The argument that campaigns had 'minimal effects' on voter behaviour was tested by Finkel (1993) at three presidential elections (1980-88). He concluded that pre-campaign attitudes could predict vote intention for 80-85% of voters. Once changes in attitudes from the campaign were accounted for in the same model, they only led to a slight improvement in accuracy. Similar results were found for German federal elections (Finkel and Schrott 1995). In both the US and Germany, the predominant effect from the campaign was reinforcing the views of existing voters rather than convincing voters to switch. More recent field experiments found no evidence that campaign contact increased the number of voters that changed their vote choice (Kalla and Broockman 2018). Both the theoretical models of voting behaviour and evidence-based studies in the US have suggested that campaigns are unlikely to have either significant effects on individual voters or change the election outcome.

Campaign activities are unlikely to affect voters in a consistent way. Scholars have classified three different campaign effects: reinforcement, activation and conversion. Voters who are 'reinforced' during the campaign have their pre-existing views reaffirmed by the events of the campaign (Schmitt-Beck 2007). Reinforcement could be negative about rival parties or positive about the party a voter supports. Reinforcement may not be a particularly exciting campaign effect, but it is important to achieve high turnout among 'core' supporters.

Individuals activated by the campaign are considered to hold a latent predisposition to vote for a party. Events of the campaign activate this disposition as a time of heightened political activity (Finkel 1993; Schmitt-Beck 2007). For example, a voter may be generally supportive of the Labour Party, but considered voting Liberal Democrat when the campaign started, before returning to Labour by polling day. Typically, the effects of reinforcement and activation are more difficult to measure, but continue to be important to the outcome of elections (Erickson and Wlezien 2012; Fisher 2018). The final campaign effect is conversion. Viewed as 'the holy grail of campaign effects', conversion occurs when an elector switches from voting for one party to another (Erickson and Wlezien 2012, 9). It is considered the most powerful effect because it not only adds to a party's total votes but also takes votes away from their rivals. Such effects can be observed with access to panel data that records pre-campaign vote intention and post-campaign vote choice. However, for conversion effects to take place, it requires voters to be undecided or open to changing their vote during the campaign. Taken together, reinforcement, activation and conversion effects offer a clear framework for assessing the influence of the campaign on voters.

A growing number of British voters are considered to be 'late deciders', meaning these voters who decide their vote choice during the campaign and create the possibility of larger conversion effects (Fisher 2018; McAllister 2003). 'Floating' voters are another group that may be greatly affected by conversion. This highly coveted group is often referenced without explanation of the characteristics that differentiate floating voters from other voters (Russo 2014). Some explanations have been provided, such as being weak partisans with no ideological leaning, or voters that regularly switch parties from one election to the next (Bearnot and Schier 2012; Mellon 2016). Mayer (2007, 359) provides a theoretical definition of a 'swing' voter as someone who is 'not so solidly committed to one candidate or the other

as to make all efforts at persuasion futile'. This definition provides a useful basis for conceptualising a highly sought-after group of voters.

It is worthwhile considering three contextual points that could impact campaign effects. Firstly, not all election campaigns will be influential and affect the result of an election. Parties and candidates that are unpopular leading into the campaign are unlikely to achieve a decisive breakthrough during the campaign (Fisher, Cutts, and Fieldhouse 2011). The level of support between candidates and leaders should be competitive to observe campaign effects (Erickson and Wlezien 2012). Secondly, parties must have an effective strategy for targeting their campaign resources. If elections are considered to be close where popular parties have similar levels of support, those that are effective in targeting their resources in specific seats or districts will result in more visible effects (Fisher 2018). Middleton (2019, 2014) has outlined how party leaders strategize which constituencies they visit during a campaign, with the purpose of maximising their party's vote in that locality. Thirdly, the electoral system influences potential campaign effects. Parliamentary elections can be more predictable from opinion polls a year out from polling day, in contrast to presidential elections which are more difficult to predict months before the election (Jennings and Wlezien 2016). This is because attachments to parties are considered more durable than attachments to individual candidates. In close majoritarian parliamentary elections, shifts in votes towards one particular party in key constituencies can change the entire outcome of the election, even if this constitutes a small number of votes overall (Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012). For leaders to have an influential effect on the outcome in such circumstances, convincing huge swathes of the electorate is not necessary.

The media environment of modern election campaigns is highly conducive to party leaders influencing voters. As I outlined previously, the focus on leaders is heightened during

modern general election campaigns through leader-centric televised programs (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013; Harrison 1992; Mellon 2016). Political parties adjust their media strategies accordingly, if they believe their leader to be a vote winner. As the media content about party leaders places greater emphasis on the personality of leaders, often at the expense of policy, parties scheme to emphasise the positive points of their leader's personality (Gaber 2013; Mazzoleni 2000). The Conservatives placed David Cameron's personality at the forefront of their 2010 campaign to 'decontaminate' the Conservative Party brand (Seawright 2013, 167), while the 'strong and stable' leadership of Theresa May was thought to be one of the party's most valuable assets in 2017 (Cowley and Kavanagh 2018). Leaders can attempt to transform their reputation during campaigns in an effort to persuade or reassure voters to support their party. Such a strategy does not always go to plan and in the case of Ed Miliband in 2015 there were only minor improvements (Fielding 2015). Additionally, reputations and popular perceptions of leaders can crumble, as in the case of Theresa May in 2017 (Bale and Webb 2018; Cowley and Kavanagh 2018). The appeal of leaders can be used during modern election campaigns in concentrated effort to influence vote choice before polling day.

The professionalisation of election campaign teams suggest that political parties recognise their fortunes can change decisively over a few weeks. The growth in political campaigns being run by public relations professionals, rather than party officials, is evident across advanced democracies (Kavanagh 1995; Mughan and Aaldering 2018). Professionalisation of electioneering, and television becoming the primary medium of political information, have contributed to a reassessment of campaign effects (Schmitt-Beck 2007; Sunshine Hillygus and Jackman 2003). The campaign teams of UK political parties are now highly professionalised, with special advisors directing campaigns to the discomfort of some party officials (Farrell and Webb 2003; Kavanagh 1995; Sinclair and Atkinson 2017).

Politicians and their costly campaign teams would disagree with any suggestion that political campaigns only serve to funnel voters to a predetermined destination (Erickson and Wlezien 2012). The attitude of political parties to election campaigns directly conflicts with scholars' arguments that campaigns have minimal effects (Butler and Stokes 1969; Finkel 1993). It is worth considering that highly professionalised campaign operations from a political party may only serve to cancel out the campaign efforts of rival parties. However, with access to panel data it is possible to observe the churn of campaign effects, even if this does not translate to changes at the aggregate level of party support.

Evidence of Leadership Effects from Recent Elections

Investigations into the effect of party leaders have arrived at contradictory conclusions. Some have argued there is little evidence to suggest that evaluations of party leaders have a strong effect on voters' choices (Bartle and Crewe 2003; Curtice and Blais 2001; King 2002). Other studies have found convincing evidence that party leaders have a strong effect in explaining vote choice (Clarke et al. 2016; Mughan 2009, 2015). Mughan and Aaldering (2018) suggest that contradictory conclusions are likely as studies often examine the effects of leaders in a single election, with the context of the elections being highly important in shaping how significant party leader effects can be. While the context of each election can affect how influential leaders are on vote choice, leader effects remain 'sizeable and non-trivial' (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2013, 35).

Recent leaders in the UK have received particular attention from researchers exploring the effect of leaders on voter behaviour. Tony Blair has received notable attention in this regard. A reputation of competency and popularity for Blair among the electorate meant he was an electoral asset to the Labour Party, whilst competing against a series of Conservative

leaders deemed to be less competent (Andersen and Evans 2003; Foley 2008). Even after being Labour leader for eleven years and Prime Minister for eight of those, Blair continued to have a lead over his Conservative rival Michael Howard in the 2005 General Election (Clarke et al. 2006; Norris and Wlezien 2005). John Major was also considered to be a vote winner for the Conservatives in 1992, leading them to a surprise victory against Labour and Neil Kinnock (Clarke, Ho, and Stewart 2000; Sanders 1992). Much attention was given to Nick Clegg during the 2010 campaign, where he transformed popular perceptions of his own image and his party's standings rose dramatically in the polls. Clegg quickly became his party's most visible electoral asset and his approval rating reached 77% net satisfaction (Fisher, Cutts, and Fieldhouse 2011; Kavanagh and Cowley 2010). This period was aptly dubbed "Cleggmania", but despite Clegg's rising approval ratings the Liberal Democrats lost seats in 2010, as ineffective local campaigning did not capitalise on Nick Clegg's national performance (Fisher, Cutts, and Fieldhouse 2011). Many studies of party leaders in the UK have examined leadership effects in explaining the outcome of a single election.

Examinations of the 2015 and 2017 general elections gave considerable attention to the appeal of party leaders in explaining the outcomes. David Cameron won a small majority in 2015 at the expense of Ed Miliband in an election considered too close to call. Though he was not a particularly popular leader, Cameron achieved a reputation for competence and as someone who could make tough but fair decisions (Byrne, Randall, and Theakston 2017; Whiteley et al. 2013; Worcester et al. 2016). Cameron's net satisfaction ratings were healthy by historic standards, but most importantly remained comfortably higher than Ed Miliband's for the duration of the 2010-15 parliament (Worcester et al. 2016). Ultimately, most voters considered Ed Miliband was a less safe option than Cameron to be Prime Minister (Fielding 2015). Two fifths of the Labour electorate thought Miliband was not ready to become Prime

Minister on the eve of the 2015 election (Worcester et al. 2016). A notable section of the electorate believed there was something inherently wrong with Miliband, as his attempts to change voters' perceptions of his abilities over the campaign came up short (Fielding 2015; Gaber 2017). Issues with Miliband's leadership, set alongside the relatively good evaluations enjoyed by Cameron, were understood to contribute to the Conservative victory (Cowley and Kavanagh 2016; Geddes and Tonge 2015).

Theresa May retained high leadership ratings after becoming Prime Minister in July 2017 and with a consistent lead in leadership evaluations in the polls, she was expected to be a vote winner for the Conservatives (Denver 2018). The Conservatives were so confident in May's personal appeal that their campaign was entirely focused around their leader (Bale and Webb 2018; Heath and Goodwin 2017). Conservative expectations of a relatively easy victory were buoyed by the fact that the veteran left-winger Jeremy Corbyn had become leader of the Labour Party and was recording very low favourability scores from voters. The unexpected dynamic of the 2017 election was the reversal in fortunes for the leaders (Smith 2017). As the campaign progressed, May became increasingly unpopular, while Corbyn became increasingly more popular (Mellon et al. 2018). Corbyn's personal campaign approach contrasted to the rigid persona of May's performance (Goes 2018). The substantial change in the assessments of party leaders over a short period of time provides a fairly unique case to examine the effect of leaders. The 2015 and 2017 elections therefore provide distinctive cases for examining the role and effect of party leaders on voter behaviour.

Narratives from Election Night: Explaining Election Results and the Role of Party Leaders

Media narratives explaining the outcomes of UK elections originate during live broadcasts of election results. Programmes begin to convey and describe the results to the

viewers as votes are counted (Lauerbach 2013; Orr 2015; Ross and Joslyn 1988). Explanation follows the presentation of results, which serves as an initial analysis of the results. Narratives which emerge on election night can frame the legacy of an incumbent, define an outgoing government, and establish political capital for parties and leaders (Cathcart 1997; Hale 1993; Mendelsohn 1998). The immediate nature of these explanations could be consequential for how election results are interpreted. Contemporary explanations of election outcomes begin seconds after the polls have closed with the reaction to the exit poll prediction long before the analysis of election study surveys can take place. In the 2017 broadcast, commentators explained that Labour did better than expected because a 'Youthquake' had taken place, meaning that turnout had increased unexpectedly among younger voters. The term 'Youthquake' became so central to the political narrative that in 2017 it was named Oxford Dictionary's 'word of the year'. Following Prosser et al.'s analysis of survey data they concluded that the reported Youthquake as a myth (British Election Study Team 2018; 2020), while other researchers responded to reassert the case that the youth vote had made a significant and discernible difference (Sloam and Henn 2019; Stewart et al. 2018; Sturgis and Jennings 2020). The Youthquake example illustrates how competing explanations of the result can be proposed by academics long after the narrative has been established.

The nature of election night broadcasts means explanations develop over the night, as more results are reported, and begin to describe national outcomes in greater detail. Election night broadcasts are the first time that political commentators and politicians reflect on the reasons that contributed to the election outcome. On election night, political actors react to individual constituency results and to the emerging evidence of the overall performance of their own, and rival parties. This presents a unique dynamic where politicians, broadcasters and commentators must react to the results in 'real time'. The unique features

of election night have been highlighted by several researchers. Marriot's (2000) study details the distinct nature of these broadcasts in connecting the 'centre', in the form of the BBC studio, to the 'periphery' of a multiplicity of outside broadcast locations (such as election counts, party headquarters and party leaders' homes). Lauerbach (2013, 2007) evaluates the purpose of UK election night broadcasts in comparison to public and private broadcasters, and offers comparisons with Germany and the United States.

The BBC has broadcast televised general election results programmes since 1950, presenting individual constituency results and the wider outcome (Crick 2018). The 1997 UK General Election broadcast received widespread attention because of the decisiveness of Labour's landslide victory following 18 years of Conservative government. Cathcart (1997) accounts the entirety of the night in 1997, albeit from a journalistic view point rather than an academic study. Cathcart's focus is on capturing the drama of Labour's historic landslide, attributing a significant section to Blair's triumphant speech to a jubilant Labour victory party. Dedicated mobile camera crews were deployed to follow the leaders of the three main parties by 1997, allowing broadcast journalists in the studio to track their movements across the night (Marriott 2000). The decision to follow the movements of party leaders with mobile camera crews signals their importance to the producers of the broadcast. Lauerbach (2007) explains that the announcement of Labour's victory in 1997 would mark the end of John Major's leadership of the Conservative party and begin the internal struggle to replace him. Furthermore, Lauerbach (2007) identifies how broadcasters frame the exit poll around the Labour leader as, 'Tony Blair is to be Prime Minister', rather than the Labour party winning the election. Each of these studies on the 1997 election have highlighted the particular attention given to leaders during the broadcast. Academic study into election night broadcasts in the US have used textual data to study the discussion of character traits of

presidential candidates. Most notably Ross and Joslyn (1988) describe how on election night in 1984, Walter Mondale's character was discussed in a positive tone, marking a dramatic change from the campaign where he was consistently criticised. Scholars have identified how leaders are considered to be important on election night, yet they have not engaged in a systematic study of the role of leaders in the broadcasts and how they are used to explain the election results.

The principal authors of the *Nuffield Series* on UK General Elections, Cowley and Kavanagh (2016, 2018; Kavanagh and Cowley 2010) have dedicated a chapter to the events of election night from 2010 – 2017. The primary focus of these chapters is a chronological account of the night as a whole, focusing on behind-the-scenes reactions and activities, although Cowley and Kavanagh also highlight some key moments from election results programs. Particularly, the authors outline how politicians attempted to control the narrative of the outcome during these broadcasts. Opinion polling in 2015 suggested that either Labour or the Conservatives could form the next government and politicians were briefed to engage in a 'battle for legitimacy' during election night broadcast. The 'battle' centred around whether David Cameron could remain in number 10 even if the Conservatives did not win a parliamentary majority (Cowley and Kavanagh 2016, 214). Furthermore, Cowley and Kavanagh draw on information from sources within each party leader's team to describe the very different reactions of Cameron and Miliband to the initial 2015 exit poll prediction. Again in 2017, the authors place their emphasis on behind-the-scenes reactions from the main party leaders to the exit poll announcement and unfolding results. In each of these elections, the principal exit poll projection was that no party would have an overall majority, heightening the level of drama as politicians attempted to influence the narrative in explaining the

election. These accounts of election nights provide a sense of the dynamics during the broadcast but do not provide a methodical analysis of the broadcast.

Scholars have highlighted the value of the content from election night broadcasts but often cite the difficulty of gathering and processing the large amounts of available text (Schieß 2007). For this reason, many in the UK and US have confined their studies to only one or two elections (Lauerbach 2007, 2013; Marriott 2000; Patterson 2003; Ross and Joslyn 1988). However, the content of election night broadcasts has been identified as a valuable data source for researchers to examine a range of features during this unique event, including the centrality of leaders to explanations of the election outcome. Importantly, these programmes remain widely watched in the UK despite concerns about declining viewing figures (Coleman 2002), with estimates for 2015 and 2017 suggesting that the average audience for the duration of BBC1's election night coverage was over 4 million at both elections (Press Gazette 2017; The Guardian 2015). Election night broadcasts remain a unique and popular media event. A careful consideration of textual data from these broadcasts would contribute to a fuller understanding of how party leaders are understood to have affected the election outcome by examining their role within such broadcasts.

Challenges in the Study of Party Leaders

One of the primary concerns when examining the effect of party leaders in relation to voter behaviour is the difficulty of isolating their effect. Evaluations of party leaders are entangled with other important factors that influence voters. Often the primary concern with leader effects is how it becomes fused with the evaluations of parties. As Lobo explains, 'It is extremely difficult to disentangle the two effects – leader and party – since the two are highly endogenous' (2014, 148). Other researchers have highlighted issues in distinguishing the

effect of personality traits from long-term structural trends in the UK polity, particularly where UK Prime Ministers have become more powerful (McAllister 2013). Isolating the effect of party leaders on voters is a challenging task. Arguments that are based on explaining the effect of the party leader can be greeted with scepticism. Critics may argue that evaluations of leaders are simply a reflection of the broader evaluations of political parties (Bartle and Crewe 2003; Curtice and Blais 2001). While leaders come and go over time feelings towards parties remain a long-term driver of vote choice in elections.

However, the possibility that leaders could change the way a voter feels about a party, or be the reason why an individual identifies with the party, might be overlooked. For example, Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour party caused a surge in membership of the party, but these newer members identified themselves as 'Corbynistas' first and Labour Party identifiers second (Pickard 2018). King's (2002) approach distinguishes between the direct and indirect effects of party leaders. Indirect effects can be understood as leaders affecting voters by something that they have done, for example modernising their party or changing policy direction (Foley 2009; Worthy 2016). Direct influences are understood as leaders affecting voters because of something that he or she is. A more convincing explanation is that leaders and parties have a reciprocal causal relationship between the policies of the party and the image of their leader (Bellucci, Garzia, and Lewis-Beck 2015; Garzia 2012). In other words, both the evaluations of political parties and their leaders matter when understanding vote choice. Distinguishing the impact of leaders' personalities and characteristics is an ongoing challenge for researchers interested in leader effects.

Much research on examining the effect of party leaders is based on cross-sectional data. Using cross-sectional data, which after all is a snapshot in a specific time point, may conceal some of the intricacies of leadership effects. Most studies, while they have a unique

research question, follow a fairly fixed methodological approach that uses standard regression techniques to examine leader effects using cross-sectional data.[1] Redirecting analysis of leadership effects using panel data may provide greater insights. Barisione (2009, p. 493) has highlighted the substantial reliance on cross-sectional data in the field, suggesting 'it would be more valuable for research to focus at the same time on qualitative (or qualitative experimental) techniques, longitudinal (or panel) designs, comparative methods, and multilevel techniques.' Studying individual-level change requires data collected in specific time frames, with scholars like Garzia (2012), producing models on pre- and post-election panel data to examine the influence of leaders. Examining leader evaluations over time can provide numerous advantages. Panel data allows researchers to examine leadership evaluations in both individual-level change and differences between other respondents (Preißinger and Schoen 2016). This provides an effective methodological approach to analyse the importance of leaders relative to other factors because change in leader evaluations is specific to the individual (Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019; Mellon et al. 2018). Panel data can also be utilised to examine aggregate-level changes between waves of a particular study (Preißinger and Schoen 2016). The flexibility of the data provides researchers with a range of opportunities to examine vote behaviour and political attitudes.

Election studies are increasingly designed with panel data structures. Modern studies have expanded beyond pre, campaign and post-election waves, to develop and provide data on a comprehensive time scale rather than the months surrounding one particular election (British Election Study 2018; German Longitudinal Election Study 2017; Pollard and Mendelsohn 2016). The availability of longitudinal data expands the range of analytical

[1] See the following studies for examples (Andersen and Evans 2003; Goren 2007; Mughan 2009; Stevens, Karp, and Hodgson 2011)

techniques available to researchers. Utilising opportunities provided by the internet to create panels of respondents can also increase the size of the samples because it is a cost efficient way of collecting data (Bryman 2016; Fieldhouse and Prosser 2018). It is then possible to examine sub-sections of particular interest to researchers in greater detail. Using longitudinal data to inform analysis of party leader effects provides an opportunity to examine their impact on the individual level and investigate voters' attitudes towards leaders.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how party leaders have an important role in many aspects associated with elections, in addition to decisions about vote choice. I established during the chapter that early theories of voter choice argued voters' feelings towards party leaders had minimal effects on vote choice. Party identification and alignment to social groups were considered to minimise the potential effects from leaders. In the context of class and partisan dealignment, it has become more widely accepted that leaders could be influential in affecting voter behaviour. Research has indicated that leaders are unlikely to have a uniform effect on voters, with non-partisans, unsophisticated voters and high consumers of televised political news theorised to use leader evaluations more when deciding their vote. It is clear that, in addition to the characteristics of the British electorate, the media environment, and Westminster political system contribute to greater opportunities for leaders to be impactful. Most scholars have acknowledged that leaders are influential in contemporary UK elections, even if the salience of leaders varies between elections. The effect of party leaders is likely to have a complex relationship with vote choice and a nuanced influence over the electorate.

How leaders are evaluated by voters remains more difficult for researchers to provide a definitive answer on, particularly as specific traits may gain importance during certain

elections. Voters are likely to evaluate leaders naturally when they are exposed to information about them, but whether this is done against any well-defined criteria of an ideal leader seems unlikely. Most work in this regard has been done in a quasi-experimental framework, with participants making assumptions about fictional leaders rather than actual one. There has been less analysis of how individual feelings towards leaders develop over time, with longitudinal data on this subject remaining relatively scarce. Examining the stability of evaluations will provide important insights into whether voters make drastic adjustments about leaders in the light of new evidence or whether the first evaluations voters make of leaders remain stable.

Modern campaigns centre around leaders of political parties. Debate still exists about whether campaign events affect the decisions made by voters at the ballot box, but it is clear that media attention is disproportionately focused around the leaders of political parties. This tendency has only become exacerbated in election campaigns since 2010 that include televised leader debates. In addition, if parties consider their leader to be an electoral asset, they may choose to focus even more on these leaders during the campaign. Campaigns may provide an opportunity for leaders with weaker evaluations to transform their reputation over a few weeks. Specifically, leaders are likely to want to improve their evaluations among voters that could convert during the campaign whilst at the same time also reinforcing their core vote. If leaders are able to convince this key group of voters during the campaign, then it pinpoints the specific circumstances where party leaders impact vote choice.

The actions of leaders and their performance during the campaign are considered important details in explaining the outcome of elections. Long running series such as *Britain Votes*, *Britain at the Polls* and the *Nuffield Series* on general elections have documented how leaders help explain the outcome of elections. In order to provide highly detailed accounts of

each election these explanations are not available until months after polling day. Instead explanations of the results begin almost immediately, with results programmes on election night providing the first initial understandings of the results. While researchers have found it difficult to utilise these broadcasts in their analysis, it has been demonstrated that parties will attempt to shape the narratives of the election that are first developed during the broadcast. Party leaders have been identified as important actors during election night broadcasts, despite researchers detailing problems collecting and analysing this data. In the few British election broadcasts analysed in greater detail, leaders have received interest from scholars but as these elections are analysed in isolation, there is no context on whether leaders have always retained this role in the broadcasts.

Having detailed important areas in the existing literature where further research would contribute to a greater understanding of the role and effect of party leaders, the next chapter outlines the methodological approach to undertake this analysis. I present the core objectives of this thesis, the hypotheses tested, and the methodological approach undertaken to provide a greater understanding of party leaders.

Chapter 3 : Research Design, Methods and Approach

As previous research has shown, investigating the role and effect of party leaders is complex. Difficulties in disentangling leaders from other effects and the political context can lead to divergent conclusions (Barisione 2009; Mughan and Aaldering 2018). The aim of this thesis is to provide a fuller understanding of leadership evaluations, their effect on vote choice and the role of leaders for explaining election outcomes. Leaders are investigated in three distinct political contexts in this thesis. First, over a three-year period from 2014-2017 that includes two general elections. Second, during the campaigns for the 2015 and 2017 general elections. Third, in the immediate post-election environment of election night broadcasts. A central hypothesis is developed in relation to each context, with additional sub-hypotheses developed to investigate further nuances in the effects and role of party leaders. The purpose is to examine fundamental aspects of party leaders and also to provide greater evidence about individual election results. While I have outlined that leaders are under-researched in some respects, this study aims to build upon the cumulative knowledge about party leaders through utilising methodological advancements and gathering new data on the subject. Advances in methodological approaches and survey designs are outlined as a necessary step to provide a more detailed understanding about leader effects. These opportunities make it possible to analyse party leaders from new angles and in different contexts.

To answer the hypotheses outlined in this chapter, I provide a summary of the data and methods used to test them. The British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) is used extensively in this thesis. I describe the richness of this dataset and its appropriateness for analysing questions about voters' assessments of party leaders and the effect of leaders on voter behaviour. Taken together, the size of the BESIP and the number of waves in which the

survey was completed, represent a unique opportunity to analyse party leaders. Reliable panel data, such as the BESIP, widens the available methodological approaches when studying party leader effects. Multilevel models, path models and machine learning approaches can utilise different aspects of the longitudinal research design and contribute new insights about party leaders. Each of these approaches is described in detail in this chapter to answer specific research questions. To examine the role of party leaders in the post-election narrative it was necessary to create a new data set of BBC election night transcripts. Transcripts were analysed thematically to maintain the nuances of the broadcast data, while providing a detailed and comparative study of party leaders. The analysis is complemented by descriptive statistics that provide useful summaries that present trends in the data.

This chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I outline and discuss each hypothesis, embedding it within the relevant literature. Following this, I describe the research design and data analysis techniques that are used to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions posed by this thesis. Next, I present the quantitative and qualitative data that were selected for analysis. The characteristics of the BESIP are outlined and the suitability of using the panel to analyse leader effects is explained. Details about the specific statistical methods used to analyse the quantitative data follow. The chapter then moves to the qualitative data, how the election night transcripts were gathered, and the level of information retained in the transcript. The chapter concludes by reviewing the process undertaken to analyse the transcripts.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Party leaders have a dominant role in modern politics and have a complex relationship with voters. As a result, the effects and role of party leaders are highly nuanced, requiring the

careful construction of hypotheses. Box 3.1 sets out each of the hypotheses that are tested in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. The first hypothesis examines how voters' leadership evaluations change over time, while the second examines how these changes affect vote choice during the campaign; and the third hypothesis examines how leaders are used to explain the outcome of elections during election night. The hypotheses seek to extend existing knowledge about leader effects, with a particular emphasis on seeking to identify causal relationships between variables.

Box 3.1: Hypotheses and sub-hypotheses

Evaluations of leaders will vary over time.

The point in the electoral cycle when data is collected will affect how much evaluations change.

Where new party leaders are evaluated for the first time, there will be greater change in evaluations.

During general election campaigns, there are greater changes than baseline changes in evaluations of leaders.

Evaluations of party leaders are stable during waves where there is no leadership change or general election campaign.

Changes in leader evaluations are relative to changes of rival leaders.

The size of change in leadership evaluations will differ between voters.

Voters with weak or no party identification will have greater changes in evaluations.

Voters with lower levels of education, or who find it difficult to understand politics, will have greater changes in evaluations.

Voters that use television as their source of political information will have greater changes in evaluations.

Changes in leadership evaluations during general election campaigns affect vote choice

How voters feel before the campaign will largely predict their actual vote choice.

Pre-campaign leadership evaluations have a strong effect on vote choice.

Changes in leadership evaluations during the campaign improve predictions of vote choice.

Most voters are unlikely to change vote choice, irrespective of changes in leadership evaluations seen over the campaign.

The effect of leadership evaluations will differ across voters and elections

Of the voters who do switch during the campaign, change in leadership evaluations explain this choice.

Voters susceptible to converting during the campaign will have moderate pre-campaign views.

Change in leader evaluations during the campaign will be more moderate in 2015 than 2017 and the effect of evaluations will reflect the level of change.

Party leaders are central figures in the explanations of modern elections during election night

Discussion and focus of party leaders increase over time.

Party leaders are central to the immediate understandings presented by broadcasters in explaining results.

Greater focus is given to leadership succession, performance and characteristics of leaders during modern coverage.

Modern election night broadcasts examine the performance and characteristics of leaders during the preceding campaign.

Actions of leaders are blamed and praised by participants when explaining the outcome of elections.

Individual evaluations of party leaders will vary over time

The first hypothesis is framed to examine whether voters' leader evaluations change over time and investigate causes of this change. Originally determined to be a 'short-term' factor by Butler and Stokes (1969, 1974), leader evaluations were seen to be guided by long-term attachments to parties and this suggested that voters' feelings about leaders would be stable. Do voters make up their mind about a leader and stick with it or are they responsive to political events and update their evaluations accordingly? Leaders are now considered to play a larger role in most voters' electoral choices than in the past (Clarke et al. 2016; Costa Lobo 2014) but there has been little investigation into individual-level changes in evaluations over time. Two significant political events that could produce change in evaluations are new leadership of a party and the intensive general election campaign period. New leadership provides an opportunity for voters to examine a new leader, re-examine their competitors and boost the popularity of the party (Brown 1992; Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu 2019; Johnston, Hartman and Pattie 2019; Stewart and Carty 1993). Because television coverage of modern elections typically diverts ever more attention to leaders, voters are exposed to an increase in campaign coverage of leaders that may prompt them to adjust their evaluations (Berz 2020; Cowley and Kavanagh 2018; Gidengil 2013; Mughan and Aaldering 2018).

If evaluations do change, it raises another important question: are evaluations changing in isolation or relative to other leaders? It is important to investigate changes in the evaluations of rival leaders to provide a greater understanding about how voters evaluate leaders. Previous evidence suggested that relative assessments between the leaders of the largest two parties are likely, but there has been little consideration of minor party leaders (Goffin and Olson 2011; Mughan 2015). Examining whether leadership evaluations change in

relation to multiple leaders will provide a greater understanding of the dynamics of these evaluations. This argument contrasts with other studies that suggest voters compare leaders against ideal-type criteria (Bittner 2014); instead voters pick the best of the available options.

Changes in evaluations are unlikely to be uniform across the electorate. Three sub-hypotheses were developed to test whether voters with particular characteristics changed their evaluations to a lesser or greater extent. First, voters with no party identification are expected to change their leadership evaluations to a greater extent. Voters with weak or no party identification lack a strong long-term attachment to a political party that would guide their attitudes; instead these voters may look to party leaders to help determine their vote choice (Barisione 2009; Blais 2013; Costa Lobo 2014). Voters with strong attachments to parties are unlikely to change their evaluations of leaders because they support the wider party. Alternatively, leaders may be irrelevant to how individuals decide their vote choice. Second, voters who find it difficult to understand politics are more likely to show greater changes in evaluations. This hypothesis tests the 'unsophisticated' voter argument, where studies have argued that 'less sophisticated' voters are more likely to use leaders as a heuristic shortcut, than their 'sophisticated' counterparts (Clarke et al. 2009a; Gidengil 2013; Rico 2014). Other evidence has led to the contrasting conclusion that those with higher levels of political knowledge are more affected by leaders (Rico 2014; Whiteley et al. 2013). I attempt to provide some clarity on this contentious issue. Third, voters that consume greater televised political coverage are expected to lead to greater changes in leader assessments. As televised political coverage disproportionately focuses on leaders (Gaber 2013; Mughan and Aaldering 2018), voters who consume more of this coverage will gain more information about them (Lenz and Lawson 2011). These voters may adjust their evaluations in accordance with the greater political information they consume.

Change in leadership evaluations during general election campaigns affects vote choice

UK general election campaigns are short, often only a month long, with little time for pre-existing views to be changed (Butler and Stokes 1974; Harrop and Miller 1987). The first set of sub-hypotheses for this section assess whether pre-campaign leadership evaluations are fundamental to explaining vote choice at general elections. If most voters have stable political opinions that do not change during campaigns, it will be relatively easy to predict individuals' party choice for an election based on their pre-campaign attitudes. The next set of hypotheses examine the impact of adding change in leadership evaluations during the campaign and whether this helps explain vote choice. Isolating changes in evaluations is important because it separates differences that occur during the campaign from individuals' baseline assessments of leaders (Finkel 1993; Finkel and Schrott 1995). Despite modelling changes that occur during the campaign, it is likely that most individuals will vote for the same party they intended to vote for before the campaign started. In other words, the primary campaign effect observed is likely to be a reinforcement of pre-existing views (Finkel 1993; Wlezien and Erikson 2002). This does not mean that reinforced voters have static opinions during the campaign but that their opinions would not change significantly enough to alter their vote choice, or that tentative initial preferences become stronger during the campaign. Moderate changes to leadership evaluations can assist in reaffirming vote choice or activating pre-disposed attitudes to vote for a party (Erickson and Wlezien 2012).

Nevertheless, voters that do convert during the campaign are of particular interest to researchers and political parties (Erickson and Wlezien 2012; Fisher 2018). The final set of hypotheses propose that changes in leadership evaluations are essential to explaining why voters convert to another party during the campaign. However, in order for voters to be

converted during the campaign, they must first be susceptible to conversion. Voters with entrenched attitudes are highly unlikely to be converted during the campaign (Schmitt-Beck 2007). Voters that are not decisively supportive of one party leading into the campaign have greater potential to change during the campaign. I hypothesise differences between 2015 and 2017 in how effective changes in leadership evaluations are to voters who convert to another party during the campaign. Not all campaigns are influential (Erickson and Wlezien 2012), and the 2015 and 2017 elections serve as two contrasting elections to analyse. Initial assessments of these campaigns have outlined the dramatic aggregate changes in 2017 but only moderate changes for 2015 (Goes 2018; Mellon et al. 2018; Smith 2017). Comparative investigation of individual-level changes during these campaigns would provide further answers about the impact of the campaign on the outcome.

Party leaders are central figures in the explanations of modern elections during election night

Explanations of electoral outcomes begin immediately during election night television coverage (Cathcart 1997; Hale 1993; Mendelsohn 1998). This hypothesis tests whether leaders of political parties are increasingly placed at the heart of those explanations and how leaders are understood to have influenced vote choice. Assessing how this trend has developed over time provides additional insights. I also examine the different aspects of party leaders that broadcasters focus upon during the coverage. Differences in the language used between elections has been studied in US broadcasts but not in UK broadcasts (Frankovic 2003; Patterson 2003). Analysing how leaders are discussed during election night provides key information about which aspects of party leaders broadcasters highlight during the coverage. Researchers have argued that election campaigns are increasingly personalised and these hypotheses test whether the explanation of election outcomes have also become

personalised (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013). As a consequence, are leaders praised or blamed for the election results? Similarly, how much attention is attributed to the leaders' campaign performance when broadcasters are explaining the outcome? Testing these hypotheses from a dataset of seventeen elections provides an opportunity to examine how these trends develop over time. Each election has a unique context that may increase the focus on leaders during the broadcast. By examining change over many elections, I investigate whether there are periods where the focus on leaders is greater or lesser.

Research Design

I use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques to test my hypotheses. Analysing qualitative and quantitative data provided many benefits to investigate party leaders at different stages of the electoral cycle (McQueen and Knussen 2002). When investigating leadership effects on voters, the research is dominated by the analysis of British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) data. The extensive time period of the panel provides an opportunity to research leaders across the 'long campaign' and the 'short campaign'. The public availability of the BESIP allowed me to target my resources to leverage findings from the data using a range of methods. In the case of the qualitative data, I determined it was necessary to compile a new data set in order to test the hypotheses outlined in the previous section. Studying how leaders are portrayed in post-election narratives naturally lends itself to analysing qualitative data, with election night broadcasts identified as a useful data source to test the hypotheses. The complexity of studying party leaders is well documented and the approach taken in this thesis aimed to provide a nuanced analysis that utilised the best available data.

My approach aimed to provide a more comprehensive analysis compared to previous studies of party leaders. As outlined in the literature review, often researchers restrict their investigation of leaders to a single election or to only analysing party leaders using cross-sectional data gathered close to polling day (Mughan and Aaldering 2018). The British Election Study (BES) provides publicly available data that is far superior in quality than I could have collected, in total covering two general elections over a three-year period. As with all secondary data sources the survey data was not tailored to my research, but this was a necessary trade-off given the representativeness of the sample and multi-wave design. Importantly, the data here analyses more than one election and the longitudinal design facilitates advanced research techniques that have been identified, but not conducted by, other researchers (Barisione 2009). Similarly, the qualitative data set constructed for this analysis is notably larger than previous studies that have analysed election night coverage. Election night broadcast data was collected from elections dating back to the 1950s up until 2017. Gathering and cleaning the text from broadcasts was time-consuming but necessary to analyse post-election narratives. Widening the number of broadcasts used allowed trends relating to party leaders to be tracked over time. Textual data from election night broadcasts provided an important opportunity to analyse the role of party leaders beyond survey data.

Selection of Quantitative Data

The ongoing British Election Survey Internet Panel (BESIP), at the time of writing, is a nineteen-wave study, covering the period February 2014 – December 2019. I use the first thirteen waves of this panel that ran from February 2014 – June 2017. The longitudinal design of the study enables analysis of leaders over time and at specific points in the electoral cycle. BESIP data facilitated the use of a greater range of possible methodological techniques to

analyse leaders than has been possible in previous studies (Barisione 2009; Garzia 2012). The BESIP longitudinal design has been effectively utilised by other researchers, producing insightful findings on leaders (Johnston, Hartman and Pattie 2019; Mellon et al. 2018). The size of the sample, design of the panel and quality of data provide a unique opportunity to examine individual-level evaluations of party leaders over a substantial time period. This section provides an overview of the qualities and structure of the BESIP. A more complete description of the data, its management and manipulation are presented in the Research Methods Appendix sections 1 and 2 but this section provides a summary of the main characteristics.

BESIP data is structured around several major electoral events, with the details of these events noted in Table 3.1. Data was gathered flexibly by researchers who attempted to keep as many individuals in the panel as possible, but also include new individuals who may be in the study for only one or several waves (British Election Study 2018). This approach was to offset the inevitable panel attrition of the 30,569 respondents that completed the first survey. As a result, while the panel includes those who completed all thirteen waves, a series of smaller sub-panels exist that cover a smaller section of waves. A variety of weights are available in the BESIP to maintain the representativeness of the sample when studying different sections of the panel. Table 3.1 provides a complete overview of fieldwork dates for each wave. With the data structured around electoral events, the difference between fieldwork dates varies substantially. For instance, some waves follow on immediately after the previous wave has finished, while others do not begin for some months after the previous wave. I use the panel in two ways. Firstly, thirteen waves of the panel are analysed in Chapter Four to examine changes in leader evaluations over time. Secondly, in Chapter Five, particular focus is given to the pre-campaign, campaign and post-campaign waves of the 2015 and 2017

UK general elections. The BESIP has a unique design to accommodate the electoral events in the time covered and can be used flexibly by researchers.

Table 3.1: British Election Study Internet Panel (W1-W13) Fieldwork Information

Wave	Dates	Notes
1	20th February – 9th March 2014	
2	22nd May – 25th June 2014	Immediately follows European Parliament and Local Elections 22/5/14.
3	19th September – 17th October 2014	Immediately follows Scottish independence Referendum 18/9/14.
4	4th March – 30th March 2015	Pre-Campaign Wave: 2015 UK General Election
5	31st March – 6th May 2015	Campaign Wave: 2015 UK General Election
6	8th May – 26th May 2015	Post-Campaign Wave: 2015 UK General Election
7	14th April – 4th May 2016	Devolved Elections 5/5/16.
8	6th May – 22nd June 2016	Campaign Wave: 2016 EU Referendum Campaign.
9	24th June – 4th July 2016	Post-Campaign Wave: 2016 EU Referendum Campaign.
10	24th November – 12th December 2016	
11	24th April – 3rd May 2017	Pre-Campaign Wave: 2017 UK General Election.
12	5th May – 7th June 2017	Campaign Wave: 2017 UK General Election Campaign.
13	9th June – 23rd June 2017	Post-Campaign Wave: 2017 UK General Election.

There are four notable advantages of using the BESIP for this study. First, the dataset provides a notably large sample size of 30,000 respondents for each wave, facilitating analysis on sub-groups of interest, whilst keeping the sample representative. Even when filtering for respondents that complete all thirteen waves of the survey the sample size remains high (n = 5,300). However, it is important to be aware that this represents a significant level of attrition over such a long period of time. Second, high quality panel data remains rare in most national election studies and is crucial in opening up new methodological avenues for researchers. New methods are necessary for examining the role of leaders from different perspectives. Third, the dataset covers a comprehensive timescale with evaluations of party leaders recorded for all thirteen waves. Finally, the inclusion of a 'rolling thunder' design for

campaigns allows this activity to be studied on a daily level, with weights included to support this. Data of this quality is typically only available from secondary sources that have significant resources, like the British Election Study, which have substantial resources and make the data publicly available.[2]

The primary variable analysed from BES data in this thesis is 'how much do you like or dislike each of the following party leaders?'. Respondents score their feelings on an eleven-point scale ranging from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like). In each wave, respondents are asked to evaluate the leaders of the largest political parties, and if the respondent lives in Wales or Scotland, the leader of the nationalist parties too.[3] This a long-standing question within the BES series. Responses to this question have been recognised as powerful summaries of voters' feelings about leaders, meaning it is an important variable for analysing the effect of leaders (Clarke et al. 2009a, 2016; Stevens and Karp 2012). Significantly, for this research, respondents are asked the question in each wave of the survey, facilitating a wider number of available research methods. Other questions that ask about different leadership traits are not included in every wave of the survey. Therefore, the omission of questions about specific traits limits the analysis to studying the effect of leaders through summary evaluations. In an ideal world, summary evaluations and specific traits would be available in every wave, and although this is not the case for the BESIP, it does not outweigh the significant opportunities to analyse leaders over the course of the panel.

A range of variables are used to investigate the hypotheses tested in this thesis and full details of each variable are presented in section 2 of the Research Methods Appendix. I identified potential problems with how party identification is captured in the BES in Chapter

[2] For further information on the BES research design see research methods appendix section 2.2.
[3] Respondents in the England are not asked about the leaders of nationalist parties

Two (Bartle 1999; Blais et al. 2001). Nevertheless, I determined it was important to include these measurements as an important control variable in my analysis. Criticism of leader effects arguments has maintained that party identification overrides leadership evaluation (Bartle and Crewe 2003; King 2002). The omission of party identification in the analysis could overinflate the influence of leaders and remains an important part in explanations of vote choice. Other important variables incorporated into the statistical analysis are identified at the beginning of each chapter. Much of the analysis in Chapter Four investigates within person change. As such, new variables were created to measure individual-level change between each wave of the panel. 'Change' variables of party leader evaluations form the dependent variable in some of the analysis in Chapter Four and are an important explanatory variable in Chapter Five. Other change variables were calculated for respondents, such as change in the strength of party identification, and incorporated into the analysis where relevant. Individual level changes in this panel provides a distinct way of analysing the role and effect of party leaders.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

All quantitative analysis and visualisation presented in this thesis was conducted in *R*. *R* is powerful statistical software used by a wide variety of non-academic and academic researchers. The flexibility of the software's open source design allows users to develop statistical packages to enhance the capabilities of *R* for addressing specific research problems (R Project 2020). I identify when I have used specific packages to conduct my analysis. In addition to data analysis, *R* provides a sophisticated environment to manage, manipulate and store a range of datasets and objects. Effective handling of complex data, such as the BESIP, required specific training to use *R,* and additional packages, competently. In addition, it was

necessary to complete theoretical and practical training for the specific research techniques used in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. The following section provides an overview of the analytical techniques used in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, explaining their suitability for analysing the data and research objectives. Again, my aim is to provide an overview in these sections, with more technical details of each method, and their limitations, presented in the research methods appendix, sections 1.3 – 1.6.

Chapter Four employs path and multilevel models to analyse individual level changes in leadership evaluations over the panel. Path models are a type of structural equation model and are constructed in *R* using the *Lavaan* package (Rosseel 2018; Singer and Willett 2003). The degree of stability in individual-level evaluations of party leaders is analysed across the thirteen waves of the panel. The data is structured to analyse the effect of previous leadership evaluations on current waves, while controlling for variables that are likely to influence evaluations, for example party identification. The temporal ordering of path models is intuitive and presented in the figure below; it details how variables in different waves are regressed on each other. Figure 3.1 outlines an example structure of this model showing how waves are regressed on each other, with arrows for direct effects. Figure 3.2 outlines how indirect effects can be calculated through a mediating variable. Multiplying the direct effect (a) with the direct effect (b) provides the indirect effect of leadership evaluation t+1 on leadership evaluation t+3. Adding this indirect effect to the direct effect (c) provides the total effect. Investigating the mediated effects of variables and calculating the total effect provides a fuller understanding of the stability of leadership evaluations (Holahan and Holahan 1987; Marsh 1990; Streiner 2005).

Figure 3.1: Visualisation of the Structure of an Example Path Model

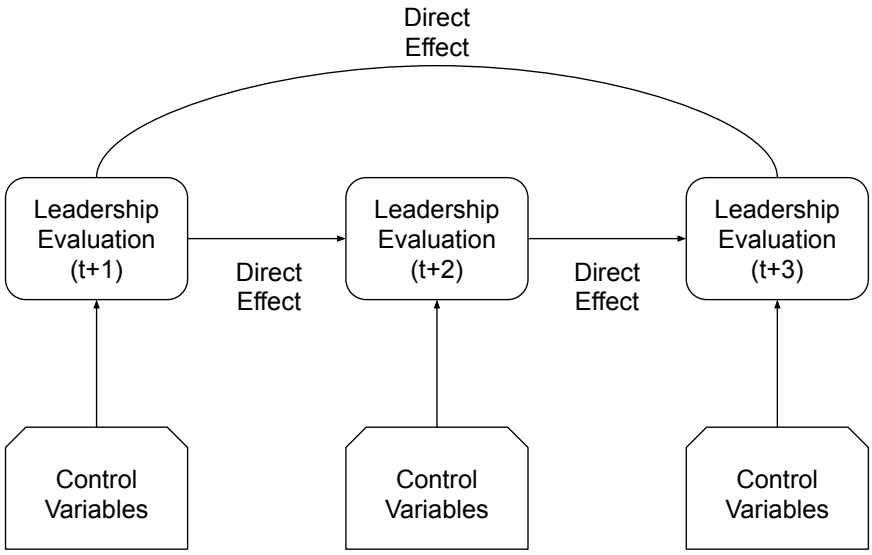
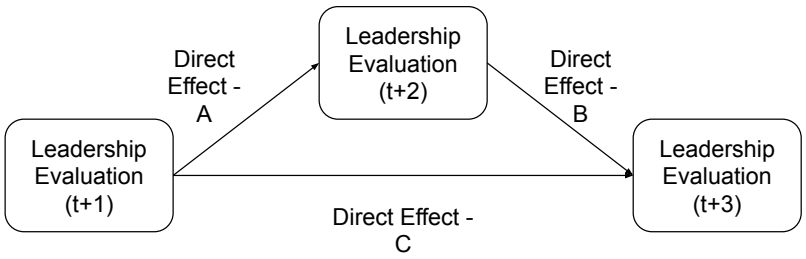


Figure 3.2: Visualisation of Indirect and Direct Effects in Path Models

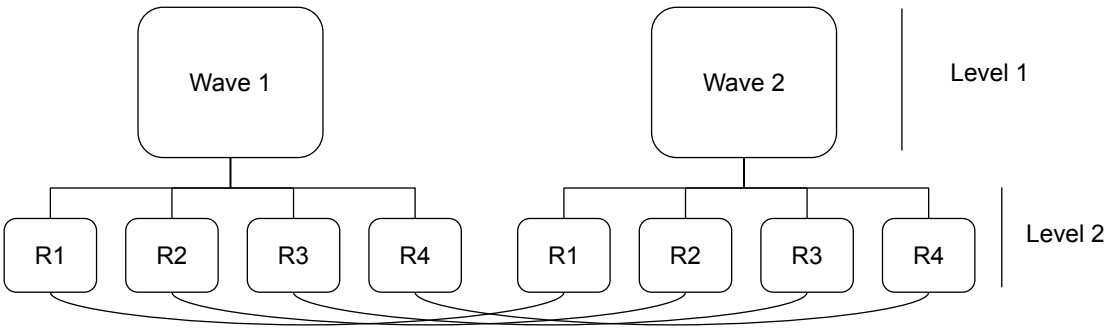


Multilevel models (MLM), or hierarchical regression models, are designed to accommodate multiple levels of structure in a single comprehensive model (Steenbergen and Jones 2002). For instance, datasets with a longitudinal design can be viewed as having a two level structure, with the top level comprising the fieldwork wave and the lower level being made up of the respondents nested within these waves (Steele 2008). MLM statistical analysis was conducted using the *lme4* (Bates et al. 2015) and *lmerTest* (Kuznetsova, Brockhoff, and Christensen 2017) packages. The dependent variable modelled in Chapter Four is individual change in leadership evaluations. Investigating change in leader evaluations for the same respondents in different waves naturally violates the assumption of linear regression that observations are independent of each other. Random intercepts are introduced for each

respondent to ensure standard errors and estimates are calculated to account for the interdependence between observations (Bell and Jones 2015; Persson 2012).

I provide a visualisation of the data structure in Figure 3.3 where responses from individuals belong to a specific wave because questions are answered within a particular context. Employing MLM techniques enables analysis of individual-level measurements over time whilst observing the specific context during each fieldwork period. Put another way, the model estimates the average level of 'within' person change in leadership evaluations over the panel, while using explanatory variables to examine the level of change between people and between different waves of the panel. Previous research has treated BES panel data as a multilevel structure to assess how likely voters are to change their vote choice during an electoral cycle (Ferrao Barbosa and Goldstein 2000; Yang, Goldstein and Heath 2000). The result is a powerful analysis that reflects the complexities of the data and in doing so investigates effects from different levels of the data within a single model.

Figure 3.3: Visualisation of a Multilevel Model Structure



Statistical analysis presented in Chapter Five uses a machine learning (ML) approach to investigate the effect of leader evaluations on vote choice by constructing models with the purpose of predicting vote choice. The *glmnet* package is used to create ML algorithms and models (Friedman, Hastie, and Tibshirani 2010). ML models are used primarily to make

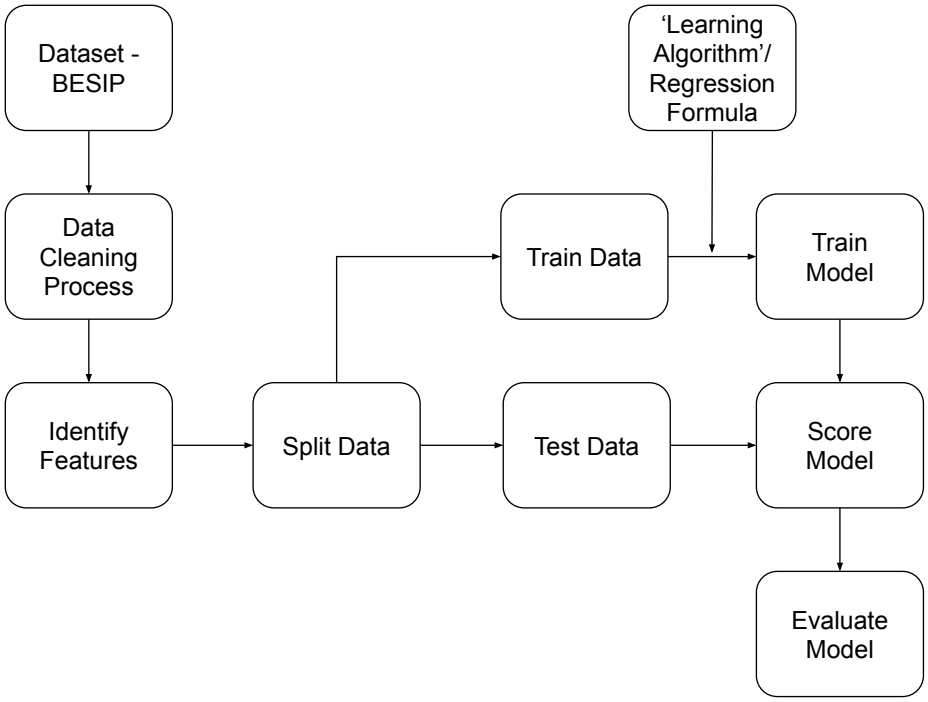
predictions, but can also be utilised to investigate causal relationships (Baćak and Kennedy 2019). ML was determined to be particularly useful for predicting party choice from respondents and identifying individuals that the model struggled to make accurate predictions about. Machine learning is often associated with artificial intelligence, which might prompt images of all-knowing supercomputers that make autonomous decisions, requiring little human intervention. This perception of ML is far from reality and even though algorithms are trained to make predictions, these require considerable human expertise in order to be successful (Boelaert and Ollion 2018). Many standard quantitative techniques can be incorporated into ML frameworks. However, what separates ML from traditional techniques is the ability utilise the learnt information of the model and test it on unseen data (Boelaert and Ollion 2018; Lantz 2015). There is a danger of overloading algorithms with masses of variables, where predictive accuracy may be high, but it becomes difficult to make sense of the relationships between variables. Avoiding the creation of 'kitchen sink' models was a primary consideration, and as a result, the models only contain key variables outlined in Chapter Five. The use of ML techniques is growing in political science and offers further opportunities for analysis but has not yet become a common approach (Hindman 2015).

A general framework for machine learning is presented in Figure 1.5. For more detail about ML approaches, see section 1.5 of the Research Methods Appendix. The flowchart begins with the raw BESIP dataset. The data was then cleaned, and important features of the data were identified. After settling on the dependent and independent variables, the original data set is split into *Train* and *Test* sets. Splitting the data provides two advantages in the analysis. Firstly, it prevents overfitting to the data available to researchers as this can inflate the predictive value of the resulting model. Secondly, it ensures that the resulting model can be tested on different observations than the model was trained on originally. Ultimately,

splitting the data keeps the results generalisable and provides greater validity (Hindman 2015). After developing a 'learning algorithm', in this case a regression formula, the formula is combined with the *Train* set to create the *Train* model. Under inspection this model would look similar to normal regression models with estimated coefficients to explain variation in the dependent variable. Next, using information from the *Train* model, predictions are made about the unseen test data. As the *Test* set has both the actual and predicted values, the accuracy of predictions can be scored and subsequently evaluated.

Splitting the dataset is even more important when new observations cannot be gathered easily. Ideally, predictions would be made on new observations gathered by researchers so that the original data set can be used in its entirety, creating the most well informed model (Boelaert and Ollion 2018; Bonica 2018). However, high quality survey data is expensive and often beyond most researchers' resources, including my own, so options are often limited in gathering new data. Moreover, opportunities to gather data under the same conditions are highly unlikely, given that the political context can change rapidly, rendering any additional data of limited value to the researcher's original aims. The size of the BESIP allows the data to be split without sacrificing the quality of the model.

Figure 3.4: Machine Learning Approach Flow Chart



After evaluating the model, it is important to cross-validate the initial findings by repeating the process from the split data stage. By re-randomizing which respondents go into the *Train* and *Test* sets, the rest of the process can be repeated. Using a different selection of respondents to form the *Train* model provides an assessment of whether the sample impacts the performance of the model. Cross-validating performance adds another layer of reliability to the findings if variation in performance is negligible. For the models presented in Chapter Five, I repeat the process 100 times to confirm additional reliability of the findings. Accuracy can be compared across each iteration, providing a range of predictive accuracy from the model.

Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator (LASSO) is the regression method used to train the ML model. LASSO regression is similar to OLS regression but places additional constraints when estimating coefficients (Tibshirani 1996). No p values are produced by the

model like those found in conventional regression models. Instead, estimates from insignificant variables are shrunk to exactly zero. Constraints in the regression formula help ensure the model is not overfitted by shrinking coefficients, with the objective of creating parsimonious models that are simple to interpret (Andrews 2019; Hindman 2015). The output of LASSO models looks familiar to those who are used to examining coefficients from standard regression models. Further details about LASSO regression are available in Research Methods Appendix 1.6.

Selection and Collection of Qualitative Data

To investigate the role of party leaders in post-election explanations of electoral outcomes a textual dataset of seventeen elections was created. Textual data from BBC election night broadcasts from 1955-2017 were compiled. Data were collected from three sources *YouTube, C-Span* and *Box of Broadcasts*.[4] Combined, these three sources contained raw transcript data developed from the audio from each election broadcast. *YouTube* transcripts are developed from the site's automatic-speech recognition software (YouTube 2018), which automatically generated transcripts for elections from 1955-2010, with the exception of the 2005 election, which was taken from *C-Span* who have their own speech recognition software. Autonomous automatic speech recognition systems are recognised as providing efficient transcription with an acceptable level of error (Novotney and Callison-Burch 2010). While transcripts required cleaning, their accuracy remained high enough to be useful and their availability was crucial for maintaining the scope of the study. For the 2015 and 2017 elections, transcripts were available via *Box of Broadcasts* and formed by aggregating subtitles that accompanied the live broadcast. As expected, these transcripts

[4] Specific URL links for BBC Election Night broadcasts are listed after the bibliography

were higher in accuracy than automated transcripts, although numerous errors remained. Therefore, while an excellent basis for each transcript was available, each still required significant cleaning.

The first hour of each broadcast is a verbatim transcript, while specific sections later in the broadcast were only cleaned once I had identified that the section was related to party leaders. Additionally, each transcript mined from YouTube consisted of one continuous block of text. Speakers were not differentiated or identified, so these were identified manually during the cleaning process. This process was necessary to understand the structure of the data. Maintaining the quality, breadth and length of all transcripts was a key objective in light of previous research that highlighted difficulties collecting election night data (Marriott 2000; Schieß 2007). Of course, the breadth of transcripts could be expanded further to include coverage from competing broadcasters. However, I decided that this would add little further value and it would have required significant additional resources to gather and process the extra data. Overall, the amount of data gathered was ambitious in scope but remained manageable to process.

One notable characteristic of broadcast coverage is that BBC broadcasts increase in length over time. Differences in the length of broadcast are stark when comparing 1955 and 2017, but this contrast is a product of incremental change. Over time, the BBC has progressively increased the length of the broadcasts. Viewers of modern election coverage would be forgiven for not knowing when coverage ends, as it seamlessly moves into news coverage the following day. To keep the length of the transcripts manageable I do not analyse coverage past 6am.[5] As such, transcripts of recent elections are naturally longer than older

[5] For a full explanation of how this process was managed see research methods appendix section 3.2 and the 'Dimbleby rule'

ones. It is important to acknowledge the difference in broadcast length when making direct comparisons between specific elections. There is, however, a remarkable level of continuity in the transmissions over the 62-year period. High profile BBC journalists have presented and participated in election night coverage since the beginning. David Dimbleby presented every election results programme from 1979-2017. Additionally, psephologists have held notable positions in the coverage, providing expert analysis of the results. For instance, David Butler contributed to every election broadcast from 1950-1979 (Crick 2018). The primary purpose of election night coverage remains the same as when it was first broadcast, to describe and explain the election results.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Coding and analysis were conducted in *NVivo*. As a form of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) it provided notable benefits in managing the substantial amount of data and organising the codes within a single interface (Bazeley and Jackson 2013; Spencer et al. 2014). Retrieving data across seventeen transcripts would be an arduous task without this software. Critics of CAQDAS may argue that it quantifies qualitative data although providing counts and statistics is helpful in demonstrating the presence of themes when a large amount of data has been analysed (Silverman 2010). Visualising trends through numeric figures when examining variation over time is also highly intuitive and should not be sacrificed for fears of 'simplifying the data'. Visualisation of the data was completed by importing data into *R*.

Cleaned transcripts of BBC election night coverage were coded thematically to synthesise this substantial and complex textual data (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). Initial codes were developed inductively from the data by analysing a subset of elections (1959, October

1974, 1997 and 2017) to create the initial codes for the remaining transcripts. This hierarchy remained fluid and was refined several times during the analysis to account for the complexities of the data (Bryman 2016). The final coding hierarchy used a combination of descriptive, attitudinal and explanative codes with descriptions of these codes available in sections 1.4 and 1.5 of the Research Methods Appendix. Multiple codes could apply simultaneously to a single section of text to provide a multileveled analysis of the data (Saldana 2012). For example, multiple codes can be used on a single section of text to describe the content of the text (leader's personality), the sentiment of the text (positive or negative) and who said it (the group of actors they belong to). The final coding structure incorporates terminology from the existing literature on party leaders in the UK to bridge codes into wider themes and existing theories. This assists in linking themes to the relevant hypotheses and sub-hypotheses.

Thematic analysis was considered the most appropriate technique to evaluate and identify macro-level trends, providing interpretation of sequences within the data (Spencer et al. 2014). Previous research adopted different approaches, synthesising the textual and visual data to provide a summary of election night data (Lauerbach 2013; Marriott 2000). Two important considerations of the data lent themselves to thematic analysis. Firstly, the size of the data available and secondly, the range of elections covered. The development of themes was achieved through a reflective coding process, linking codes together into wider themes (Punch 2013). Thematic analysis kept the research concentrated while working with a data source that could be used to analyse a variety of subjects. The themes discussed in Chapter Six examine the overall level of coverage given to party leaders, how they were discussed during broadcasts, and the responsibility attributed to leaders for the election result.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design that underpins my thesis, including the hypotheses that are tested, the data sources used and the analytical approach. The hypotheses presented here aim to contribute to existing theories and findings on party leaders following the identification of existing gaps in the literature discussed in Chapter Two. My study contributes to the literature on how voters form leadership evaluations by analysing change in evaluations over time. I also examine how impactful leadership evaluations are during general election campaigns, contributing to the wider field of voter behaviour and campaign effects. Lastly, I analyse the role of leaders during election night broadcasts and evaluate whether the results are framed around the success or failure of leaders.

I draw upon two unique sources of data to test the outlined hypotheses. Firstly, the BESIP is a comprehensive and high-quality survey that facilitates longitudinal analysis of leader evaluations. Opportunities to analyse individual level changes in leadership evaluations over thirteen waves is a unique aspect of this study and the focus of the next chapter. For the 2015 and 2017 general elections a pre-campaign wave, campaign wave and post-election wave were gathered. These three waves allow for a sophisticated analysis of leader effects during the campaign in Chapter Five. In addition, the large sample size allowed for greater concentration on the subgroups identified in this chapter. Secondly, the creation of an original qualitative dataset of election night transcripts was generated to provide an analysis of party leaders during this unique event. Seventeen election night broadcasts represent a substantial increase in the number of elections covered relative to previous studies that have used similar data. Analysis in Chapter Six focuses on analysing the overall coverage of party leaders, discussion of leaders' performance and whether leaders are held responsible for the election outcome. The number of elections covered, and the detail

contained within the transcripts enables trends to be analysed over time, while teasing out the specifics of individual broadcasts.

In order to effectively utilise the available data and test the hypotheses presented at the beginning of this chapter, I have detailed the methods used in the empirical chapters of this thesis. Naturally, methods were selected to answer the specific research questions and those most appropriate to the data. With substantial amounts of broadcast text to analyse, I chose to provide a macro-level analysis of party leaders in Chapter Six. These are supported by excerpts from transcripts and descriptive statistics to provide summaries of the data. A wide range of statistical techniques were available for analysing the BESIP. Chapter Five uses a Machine Learning framework to assess the role of party leaders in predicting vote choice and to determine the size of campaign effects for the 2015 and 2017 General Elections. Based on this analysis, I then identify persuadable voters to determine whether leaders have a significant effect on these voters. The next chapter begins the empirical analysis in this study by examining the stability of leadership evaluations over thirteen waves of the panel using path and multilevel models over thirteen waves of the BESIP.

Chapter 4 : Fluid or Stable? Leadership Evaluations During a Turbulent Period of British Politics (2014-17)

Party leaders are among the most visible politicians in the UK. Voters naturally form opinions about their character and evaluate their performance. While numerous studies have sought to examine how much these evaluations impact on vote choice, fewer studies have looked at individual-level change in evaluations over a substantial period of time (Barisione 2009), with most focusing on the aggregate impact (Bartle and Crewe 2003; Clarke et al. 2004, 2009a; King 2002). There is even less research that considers the impact of new leadership on British voters (for examples, see Berz 2020; Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019). Examining individual-level changes in leadership evaluations provides an opportunity to investigate how evaluations of leaders develop and when changes in evaluations occur over the electoral cycle.

For instance, when the incumbent leader changes, do voters distinguish between new leaders and their predecessors or does the electorate paint new leaders with the same partisan brush as the previous leader? Previous research has often examined new leadership through the lens of institutional changes in party organisation and policy rather than considering its effect on leader evaluations (Bynander and ’t Hart 2006; Foley 2009; Harmel et al. 1995; Worthy 2016; Worthy and Bennister 2020). Are changes in leadership evaluations correlated with changes in other leaders, or are they made in isolation? Findings from previous studies have indicated that voters are most likely to determine leaders’ suitability for office by comparing between available leaders (Goffin and Olson 2011; Mughan 2015) but questions remain over which leaders voters are comparing between. For example, Mughan (2015) focused on comparisons between Labour and Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat, and Conservative and Liberal Democrat leaders in the UK 2005 General Election.

Lastly, are some sub-sections of the electorate more likely to change their evaluations of party leaders? Voters with no party identification, 'unsophisticated' voters and those voters who consume high levels of televised political coverage are all groups considered to be more likely to change their evaluations of leaders (Blais 2013; Gaber 2013; Lenz and Lawson 2011; Rico 2014; Whiteley et al. 2013).

This chapter analyses thirteen waves of the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) to provide answers to these questions. The BESIP is superior to other previous data sets used to analyse the effect of change of new leadership on voters, with more recent studies demonstrating how panel data can utilise individual level changes in evaluations (Berz 2020; Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019). Previous investigations of leadership change have been reliant on aggregated data (Brown 1992; Sanders 1993; Stewart and Carty 1993). Importantly, BESIP data covers a period when all of the main UK-wide political parties changed their leader. To analyse changes in leadership evaluations over the breadth of this panel, path and multilevel regression models are used to investigate the stability of evaluations. I provide an overview of attitudes towards party leaders before testing potential effects through these models.

The results of this analysis are outlined in this chapter. Leadership change has a considerable effect on changes in individual feelings about leaders, and this effect is greater than changes to the evaluations during general election campaigns. These findings suggest that voters differentiate between new leaders and their predecessors, allowing new leaders to develop their own personal appeal, independent of their party. Evidence of effects were not uniform across the leaders examined and in this analysis were not applicable to Paul Nuttall's new leadership of UKIP. However, outside of leadership change, results suggest that leadership evaluations are highly stable across multiple waves of the panel. Furthermore, the

analysis provides clear evidence that voters' changes in evaluations of one leader is associated with changes in the evaluations of rival leaders. Such effects are strong and uniform across models, providing consistent evidence that voters assess their options in the political landscape and adjust accordingly. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that some sub-sections of the electorate are more likely to change their views than others. I find evidence that individuals who identify with a party adjust their leadership evaluations to a greater extent than those with no party identification, which contrasts to the expectation that non-partisan voters would change their assessments the most. There is some evidence that voters who find it more difficult to understand politics and voters who consume more televised political coverage adjust their evaluations more than other voters.

How Stable Are Leadership Evaluations?

Research on the evaluations of party leaders has centred around which traits and characteristics are most influential to voters' decisions about party choice (Bittner 2014; Evans and Andersen 2005; Lobo and Ferreira da Silva 2018; Stevens and Karp 2012). There is also a debate regarding whether voters compare leaders against an 'ideal type' leader, based on a specific criteria, and how the contextual factors from countries' political systems can affect evaluations (Bean and Mughan 1989; Bittner 2014; McAllister 2013). Investigating how voters initially evaluate leaders can give some insight into how leadership evaluations are first formed. With access to panel data further analysis can examine whether these initial evaluations change and, if they do, why they change. In this section, I explore three potential reasons why voters may change their evaluations of leaders.

To answer whether individual evaluations of party leaders vary over time, I test a series of hypotheses which are presented in Box 4.1. Each hypothesis is designed to examine

a different aspect of this complex subject. The first set of hypotheses test whether events such as new leadership or general election campaigns affect evaluations. The second hypothesis examines whether voters' changes in evaluations are connected to changes in evaluations of rival leaders. Finally, the third set of hypotheses examine differences between sections of the electorate. The findings relating to each hypothesis provide significant insights into the dynamics of changing leadership evaluations.

Box 4.1: Hypotheses and sub-hypotheses on Changes in Leadership Evaluations

The point in the electoral cycle when data is collected will affect how much evaluations change.

Where new party leaders are evaluated for the first time, there will be greater change in evaluations.

During general election campaigns, there are greater changes than baseline changes in evaluations of leaders.

Evaluations of party leaders are stable during waves where there is no leadership change or general election campaign.

Changes in leader evaluations are relative to changes of rival leaders.

The size of change in leadership evaluations will differ between voters.

Voters with weak or no party identification will have greater changes in evaluations.

Voters with lower levels of education, or who find it difficult to understand politics, will have greater changes in evaluations.

Voters that use television as their source of political information will have greater changes in evaluations.

There is good reason to theorise that evaluations of party leaders may change more significantly during periods when general election campaigns are taking place. Substantial focus is placed on leaders during modern general election campaigns as they participate in televised debates and interviews, giving voters a wealth of information to reassess leaders (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013; Harrison 1992; Mellon 2016). Political parties may heighten the focus on leaders further if they choose to employ a campaign strategy that places their leader at the centre of their campaign (Cowley and Kavanagh 2018; Seawright 2013). The

abundance of information about party leaders, during a time where voters will shortly be casting their ballot, may lead to a greater change in individual-level evaluations.

Studies have analysed the impact of a new party leader from the perspective of organisational change and agenda change (Bynander and ’t Hart 2006; Foley 2009; Harmel et al. 1995; Worthy 2016; Worthy and Bennister 2020) but rarely from the perspective of the voter. While there are a range of reasons why leadership change occurs, in Britain leaders are likely to resign if they fail to make sufficient progress in elections, unlike other countries where term-limits can force leadership change (Curtice and Blais 2001). Each party in Britain has their own specific rules and procedures to choose or elect a new leader. Often, winning candidates require the backing of the party elite to stand and the support of paying party members to win. Researchers using survey data have found that leadership change can explain voter behaviour at general elections (Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019) and prompt voters to re-examine the ideological positions of parties (Fernandez-Vazquez and Somer-Topcu 2019). Recent studies have illustrated the potential wealth of findings on offer when analysing how voters react to new leadership (Berz 2020; Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019). The extent to which leadership change is recognised by electors, and affects their leadership evaluations, is a crucial step in understanding the influence of party leaders on voters.

Investigating the impact of new leadership is useful in establishing whether leaders matter independently beyond party images. As was highlighted in Chapter Two, early voting models consistently argued that the role of party leaders in elections was peripheral because it was conditioned by strong partisan or class attachment (Butler and Stokes 1974, 1969; Campbell et al. 1960). More recently, King (2002) has argued that evaluations of leaders simply reflect voters’ evaluations of the parties themselves, with Curtice and Blais (2001),

drawing similar conclusions. However, these studies are approaching twenty years old, and more recent studies conclude leaders to be an independently important factor (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009a, 2016; Johnston, Hartman, and Pattie 2019). Even if scholars disagree over the effect leaders can have, they recognise the methodological challenge in separating a voter's party evaluations from their leader evaluations (Costa Lobo 2014; Davies and Mian 2010). Analysing individual-level responses to new leadership provides an opportunity to isolate independent evaluations and assess whether changes simply reflect feelings about the party they lead. After all, if leaders reflect party evaluations, then new leadership should not have a significant effect on most voters.

Not all voters are expected to change their leader evaluations to the same extent. Party identification is likely to be a mitigating factor on how individuals evaluate leaders. Evaluations are naturally affected by an individual's partisan lens, providing more favourable evaluations for leaders of parties they like and being less favourable to the leaders of parties they dislike (Bittner 2014; Goren 2007; Hayes 2005). The strength of party identification is likely to be important too, with stronger identifiers likely to have the most supportive and stable evaluations after leadership change. Non-identifiers in the electorate could be more responsive to new leadership because they have fewer long-term factors to influence their evaluations (Barisione 2009). Moreover, a large section of the electorate could fall into this category, as evidence shows a greater proportion of voters have less stable partisan attachments than is reported in regular cross-sectional studies (Clarke et al. 2009; Tilley 2008). Voters with weaker attachments to political parties are considered to be more responsive and could change their evaluations of party leaders more frequently.

Evidence relating to the sophistication of voters and party leader effects is mixed and by no means definitive (Rico 2014; Whiteley et al. 2013). A common argument within the

literature is that 'sophisticated' voters give little weight to leader evaluations (Blais 2013; Mughan 2015). The theoretical argument is that party leaders provide a heuristic for 'less sophisticated' voters, enabling voters to make decisions as if they were better informed (Clarke et al. 2004). However, considerable debate exists over whether 'sophisticated' voters ignore leaders because of their apparently greater ability to process complex policy information. On the other hand, 'less sophisticated' voters use leader evaluations as a shortcut to decide their vote choice, and therefore, may change their evaluations more regularly as the key factor in influencing their vote choice (Clarke et al. 2009a; Gidengil 2013; Rico 2014). Studies have primarily examined the 'unsophisticated' argument in the context of vote choice at national elections but assessing whether these voters regularly change their evaluation of leaders over long periods of time would provide further evidence in establishing a link between voter 'sophistication' and leader effects.

Televised coverage of politics has become increasingly personalised with greater focus on the activities of party leaders at the expense of policy discussion (Hayes 2009; Mughan and Aaldering 2018). Rico (2014) outlines the importance of television in modern elections and details the mixed evidence of TV consumption and leader effects. Voters who consume television as their primary source of media information may be more likely to change their opinions of party leaders because of the information available (Lenz and Lawson 2011). This situation is highly applicable to the UK where party leaders are the disproportionate focus of broadcast news (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013). However, because the formal campaign is heavily regulated, smaller parties achieve greater TV coverage than outside the campaign which may lead to greater changes in evaluations for leaders of smaller parties during the campaign. Furthermore, political coverage is likely to intensify around the time of a leadership change and subsequent leadership contest. As television is a platform that leads to greater

focus on leaders, voters who watch more political coverage may result in less stable evaluations of leaders.

Investigating change in voters' leadership evaluations provides an opportunity to test for further evidence of relative evaluations between leaders and whether relative effects are found between all party leaders. For instance, when a voter changes their evaluation of the Conservative leader, do they also change their evaluation of the Labour, Liberal Democrat and UKIP leaders? Mughan (2015) suggested that relative effects between Conservative and Labour leaders were likely to be the strongest. Differences in evaluations between leaders of the same party between 2015 and 2017 were considered by Johnson, Hartman and Pattie (2019) and were successful in explaining vote choice in the 2017 UK General Election. The authors measure changes in evaluations collected two years apart but additional data is available to give a fuller picture of changes between these two elections. Understanding when evaluations are changing, and whether this happens relatively, will provide further insights into the dynamics of leadership evaluations.

Approach to Analysing Individual-Level Changes Evaluations

High-quality longitudinal studies are required to study individual change over time. Barisione (2009, 493) has highlighted the substantial reliance on cross-sectional data in the field, with few studies analysing change in leadership evaluations over a substantial timeframe. Garzia (2012) and Berz (2020) have produced multilevel models on pre- and post-election panel data to examine the influence of leaders. However, analysis that considers a wider timescale beyond intense election periods is uncommon. Access to high quality data over a time period where political parties elect new leaders facilitates a powerful research

design to analyse the effect of party leader change and changes in leadership evaluations over time.

This chapter uses the 5,300 respondents who completed thirteen consecutive waves of the BESIP (British Election Study 2018). Thirteen waves of data are an impressive panel to analyse change in leader evaluations. To correct for sampling bias and substantial attrition of respondents, post-stratification weights were applied to ensure the generalisability of results. A comprehensive time frame is covered during the panel, beginning 20th February 2014 and finishing 23rd July 2017. This period saw each of the largest British political parties (Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats and United Kingdom Independence Party) change their leaders.

Table 4.1 provides full details of the data collection for each wave of the study, with accompanying notes that detail when leaders resigned and when new leaders were formally elected. A notable limitation of this panel is the inconsistency in the time between fieldwork dates. For example, fieldwork for some waves began immediately after the last day of the previous wave, while in other cases there was an eleven-month gap between waves. This inconsistency is significant to this study because the length of time between leadership change and the next wave of the study varies. This inconsistency could have implications for the findings. For instance, both Tim Farron and Jeremy Corbyn were in the job for nearly a year before the study first captured respondents' assessments of these leaders. By contrast, the first survey wave that captured evaluations of Theresa May was four months after becoming leader. Paul Nuttall is actually elected leader of UKIP during the fieldwork dates for wave 10. Capturing 'fresher' feelings toward party leaders could affect how much evaluations will change as voters may take time to gather information on new leaders and assess their performance as leader.

Table 4.1: British Election Study Internet Panel Fieldwork – Leadership Change Information

Wave	Dates	Notes
1	20th February – 9th March 2014	
2	22nd May – 25th June 2014	
3	19th September – 17th October 2014	
4	4th March – 30th March 2015	
5	31st March – 6th May 2015	
6	8th May – 26th May 2015	Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband resign on 8th May.
7	14th April – 4th May 2016	Tim Farron leader of the Liberal Democrats from 16th July. Jeremy Corbyn leader of Labour from 12th September.
8	6th May – 22nd June 2016	
9	24th June – 4th July 2016	David Cameron resigns 24th June, continues as PM until 11th July.
10	24th November – 12th December 2016	Theresa May elected as Conservative Party Leader 11th of July. Nigel Farage resigns 16th September. Returns as acting leader 5th October until Paul Nuttall is elected on the 28th November.
11	24th April – 3rd May 2017	
12	5th May – 7th June 2017	
13	9th June – 23rd June 2017	

From the four parties examined in this section, each leader that was in place when the panel began subsequently resigned following an electoral event. Three leaders resigned following electoral defeats and one following electoral success. Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg resigned as leader of their respective parties after Labour and the Liberal Democrats lost seats at the 2015 UK General Election. David Cameron resigned as Conservative leader after leading the Remain campaign to defeat in the 2016 EU Referendum, with Nigel Farage resigning as leader of UKIP after securing his longstanding ambition for the UK to leave the EU. The opportunity to examine changes in evaluations over this timeframe, with four different parties changing leaders, provides an exciting opportunity to examine differences between parties.

The primary dependent variable used to assess the effect of leadership change is: 'how much do you like or dislike each of the following party leaders?' (British Election Study 2018).

Importantly, these are questions asked during every wave of the study. An additional variable was created to capture wave to wave changes in the evaluations of each leader.[6] During some aspects of the analysis, I focus on the absolute change in evaluations, with negative values replaced by absolute values and I indicate where this is done.

A range of independent variables were included in the model to examine whether voter attitudes affected the level of change in leadership evaluations. Standard socio-demographic control variables: age, gender, education, ethnicity and household income are included in each of the models. Standard measures of party identification and strength of identification that regularly feature in British Election Study surveys are used. Selecting variables that captured political sophistication required more consideration, with previous studies using a range of variables to determine which voters are more or less sophisticated. These variables are either based on questions asked directly to the respondent or prescribed by researchers using respondents' answers to other questions. Some researchers use responses to political knowledge trivia questions to provide a measurement of sophistication (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Larcinese 2007; Singh and Roy 2014; Tillman 2012). In contrast, researchers can use responses to survey questions about how often individuals pay attention to politics or their stated interest in politics (Aaldering 2018; Clarke et al. 2009a). The BESIP includes political efficacy questions and a battery of political knowledge questions so both variables can be included in the analysis (British Election Study 2018). These are by no means exhaustive measures of political 'sophistication' but because there is no consensus for the best measurement, I employed political efficacy, political interest and political knowledge measures in separate models to examine each variable's effect.

[6] For further detail about how variables were calculated, see research methods appendix sections 2.2 & 2.3

A range of methods are used to analyse changes in voter evaluations of party leaders. Firstly, I use descriptive statistics to provide an overview of how leadership evaluations change over time. Secondly, I construct path models using the *Lavaan* (Latent Variable Analysis) package (Rosseel 2018). The objective is to examine whether previous leadership evaluations can explain later evaluations. Thirdly and finally, multilevel models (MLMs) are used to provide a comprehensive analysis of why voters' leadership evaluations change or remain stable. MLMs neatly account for wave-level predictor variables and individual-level predictor variables when analysing changes in party leader evaluations. They successfully account for the interdependence of observations and can model effects from different levels of the data structure.

Following some initial diagnostic testing that indicated a non-normal distribution of residuals, a log-transformation of the dependent variable was computed to satisfy this condition of the model. The non-normal distribution was likely caused by a substantial proportion of the sample who did not change their evaluations at all, and few respondents changed their evaluations by more than five points. To make the model consistent in its interpretation it was necessary to transform the values. Residual plotting indicated a normal distribution following the transformation. Transforming the variable for party leader change also alters the interpretation of the model because the values are much lower than the 0-10 scale of the original variable. The logarithm of party leader change ranges from 0-2.38, so effects are reflective of the new numeric range.

An Overview of Change in Leadership Evaluations February 2014 – June 2017

This section provides an overview of leadership evaluations across thirteen waves of the BESIP. Graphing the party leader change variable and like-dislike evaluations provides an initial investigation into trends within the data and how much evaluations change between waves. Waves where party leadership has changed are examined in closer detail to observe individual change in these waves of interest. As this section outlines, aggregate summaries in like-dislike evaluations can mask substantial individual change between waves. The section also highlights a noticeably greater change in evaluations following new leadership.

Figure 4.1 presents the average like-dislike scores for each party leader across the panel. Each leader's evaluation follows a unique path over the thirteen waves analysed. UKIP and the Conservatives changed leaders between waves nine and ten, whilst Labour and the Liberal Democrats saw leadership change between waves six and seven. Figure 4.1 indicates that the new Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders were no more popular than their predecessors, with average feelings highly stable over this period. Tim Farron received the same average rating as Nick Clegg (3.5), with Jeremy Corbyn's rating only marginally higher (+0.1) than Ed Miliband in wave six. Though Nuttall held a similar likeability score to Farage's in wave ten, his score drops significantly in the following wave, where he becomes the most disliked party leader in the time series. Following the resignation of David Cameron, his replacement, Theresa May, instantly became the most liked leader in the times series. She receives a substantial initial bounce in ratings in wave ten, which then peaks at an average score of 5 in wave eleven which, in comparison to the other leaders in the graph, is a very good score. Results here therefore suggest that only change in leadership caused an immediate noticeable effect on the popularity of one leader, but closer investigation is necessary.

Figure 4.1: Average Like-Dislike Scores (0-10) for Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and UKIP Leaders in Waves 1-13 of BESIP, February 2014 – June 2017

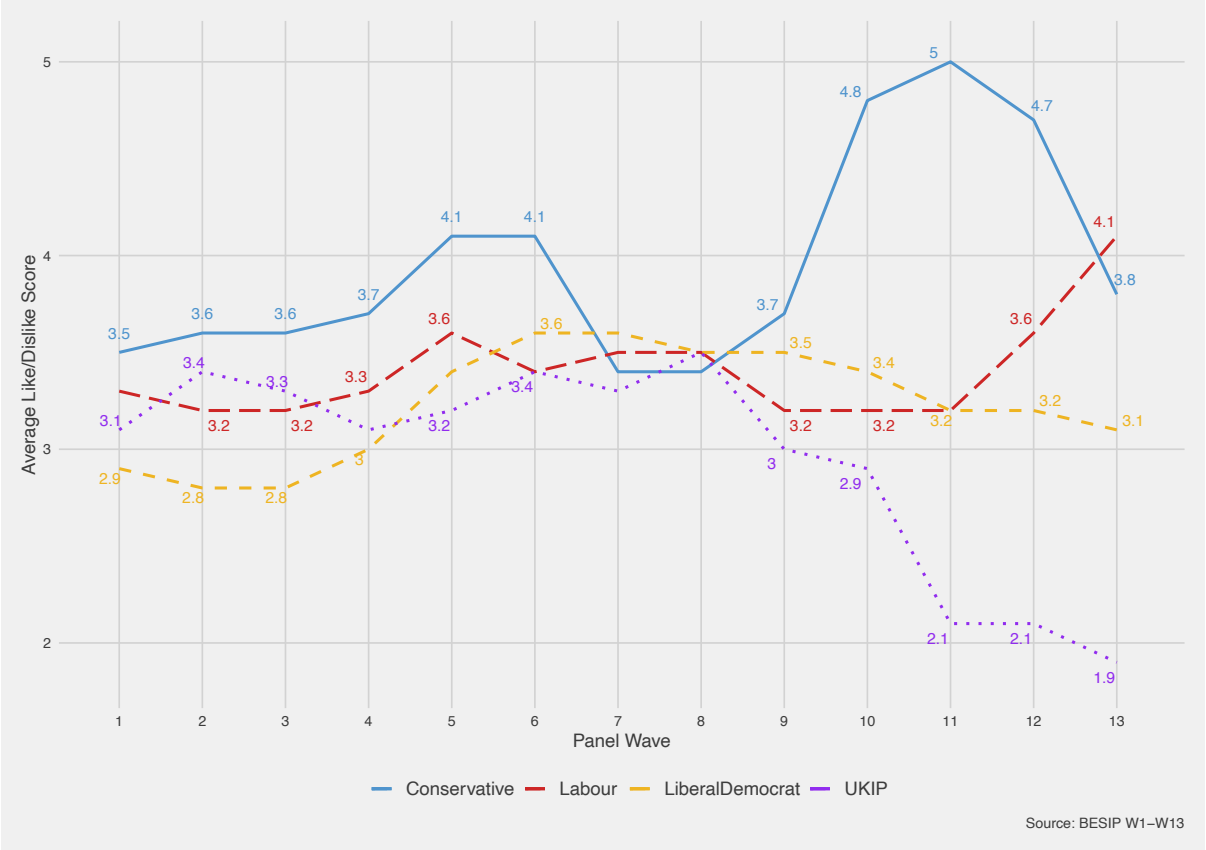
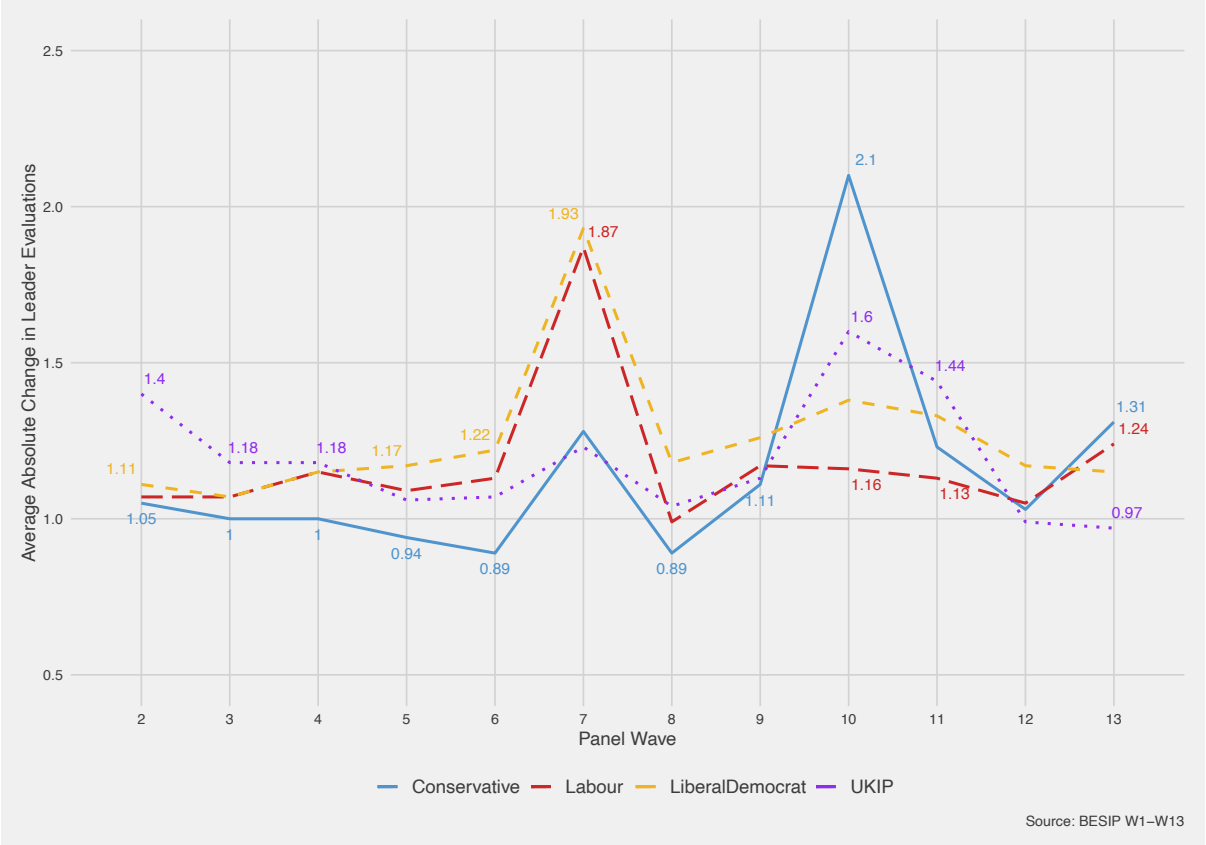


Figure 4.2 displays the absolute average change in individual party leader evaluations to examine whether trends correspond with the aggregate patterns. Figure 4.2 highlights key differences between changes in evaluations at the aggregate level and changes at the individual level. Absolute change in evaluations are used to examine the overall movement in assessments of leaders. After leadership change in each party there appears to be substantially greater average change than was seen in other waves of the panel. This effect is most pronounced with changes in evaluations of the new Conservative leader, but is also clearly visible for Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP. Thus, stability found in the aggregate like-dislike ratings masked substantial individual level churn in evaluations. The largest change is seen in the Conservative Party leader evaluations. As Theresa May became not only leader of the Conservative Party but Prime Minister too, it is reasonable that greater

changes would be observed in her circumstance. The smallest change is observed with respect to UKIP leadership change. While the biggest mean change in individual evaluations is observed in wave ten, it is not to the same magnitude seen when the other parties changed leaders. The change of 1.6 in wave ten is also not distinctively different from the score of 1.4 in wave two or the score of 1.4 in wave eleven. In each case of leadership change, Figure 4.2 suggests some initial evidence that substantial re-evaluation occurs when new leaders take over. More generally, the graph shows a persistent, baseline level of change in leadership evaluations over time. Individual changes in evaluations of a single point is unlikely to signify significant changes in how voters feel about leaders.

Figure 4.2: Absolute Average Change in Individual Like/Dislike Evaluations of Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and UKIP Leaders in Waves 1-13 of BESIP, February 2014 – June 2017



The previous figures suggested higher stability in evaluations across waves where there is no change in leadership. Table 4.2 shows the percentage in each panel who hold the

same evaluations of party leaders as they did in the previous wave. Leadership change waves are highlighted in bold. Here, the results demonstrate that substantial sections of the panel hold exactly the same evaluations of party leaders as in the previous wave. A substantial percentage (around 40%) of the panel provided identical scores to the previous wave and demonstrates the level of stability under conditions where the party leader remains the same. This contrasts to a smaller, but still notable percentage (around 20 – 25%), of the panel that changes their leadership evaluation by more than one point in each wave. Differences in evaluations of one point are unlikely to signify any real change in feelings about the leader.

The smallest percentages in Table 4.2 are found for waves where new leaders of the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats are evaluated for the first time. For both the Liberal Democrat and the Conservatives, only 25% of respondents hold the same evaluation for the old party leader and the new leader, while this percentage increases slightly to 30% of the sample for assessments of the new Labour leader. The difference between the stable share when the leader remains the same (around 40%) and the stable share when the leader does change (25-30%) is much lower. The proportion of the panel that changed their evaluation by more than one point further demonstrates individual-level differences when assessing new leaders. When evaluating Theresa May for the first time 43.2% of the sample changed their evaluation by more than one point, with the figures being 38.9% and 27.2% for Jeremy Corbyn and Tim Farron, respectively. These findings do not apply to UKIP where the percentage of respondents remains similar despite new leadership. The least stable wave for UKIP is wave two, which followed the 2014 European Parliament Elections, where UKIP polled the largest percentage of votes and won the most seats of any party in the UK. Electoral success, rather than new leadership, had a greater impact on voters' evaluations of UKIP

leaders. There is no evidence that evaluations of leaders are less stable in waves five and twelve, when election campaigns are being fought, than they are at other times.

Table 4.2: Percentage of Panel Recording No Change in Leadership Evaluations

Wave	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	UKIP
2	43.0	41.9	41.3	38.8
3	44.6	42.1	41.9	41.5
4	44.1	39.8	40.2	42.4
5	44.2	40.9	39.0	46.8
6	46.5	40.4	36.6	45.9
7	40.6	**29.2**	**25.3**	42.4
8	48.5	43.1	35.6	45.1
9	43.8	39.5	36.7	45.6
10	**25.9**	41.9	35.6	**42.7**
11	35.1	41.4	34.3	43.2
12	43.4	44.7	38.3	49.6
13	37.8	41.5	39.6	50.6

These results raise the question about the range and distribution of change in evaluations between each wave, especially during waves with new leadership. Figure 4.3 below provides a visualisation of the 'typical' change in leadership evaluations between waves. Wave four is used as an example because each leader had led their party for at least four years and there are no electoral events during this wave. As the leaders were established in their position, it would be expected that leadership evaluations in this wave are highly stable and this is clearly the case.

Figure 4.3: Change in Like/Dislike Evaluations During a 'Normal' Wave With No Leadership Change

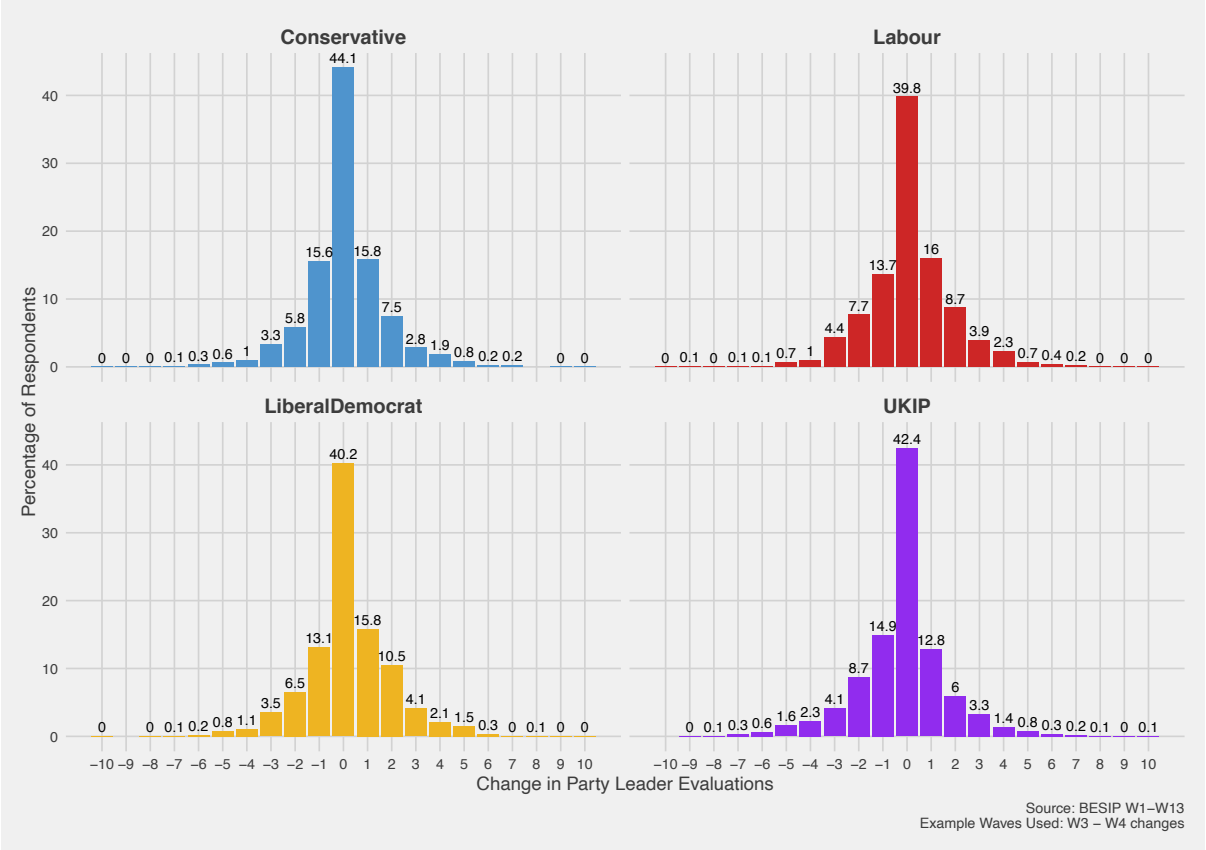
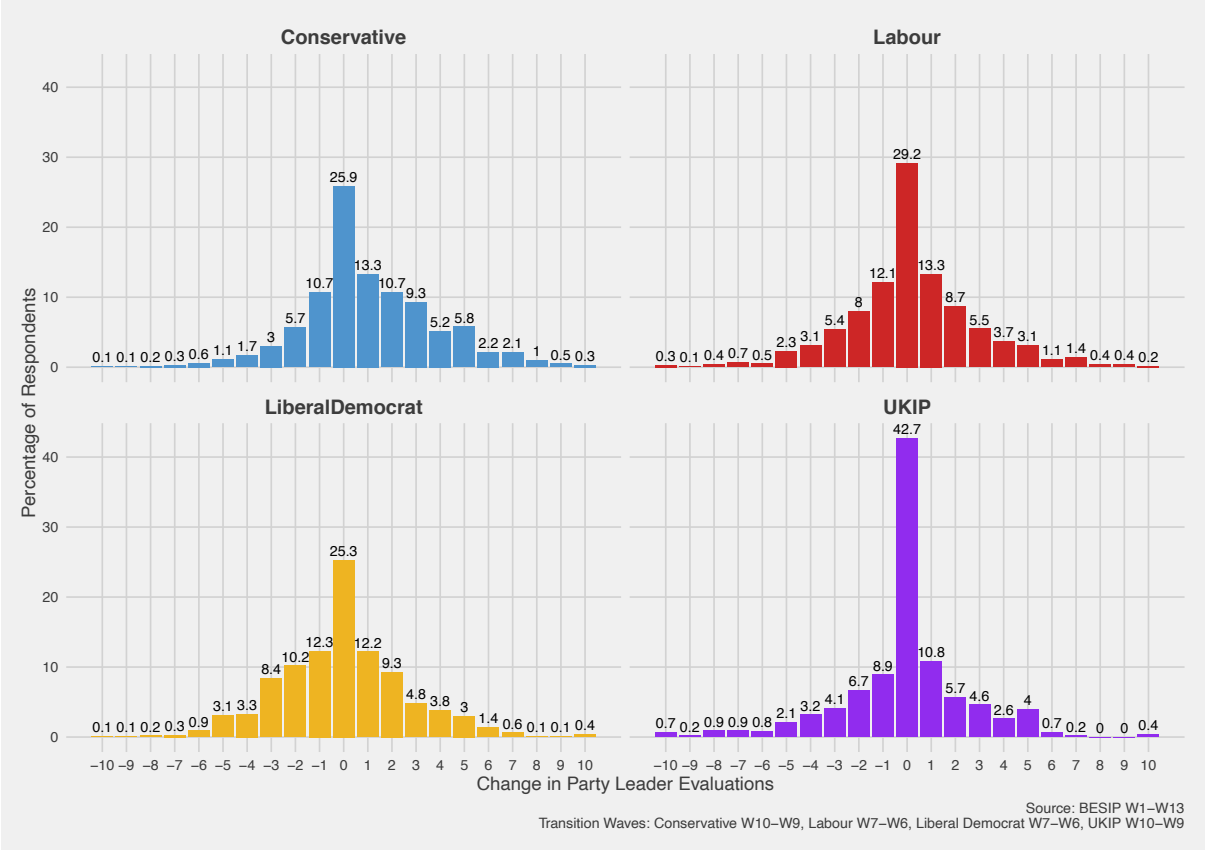


Figure 4.3 shows a normal distribution of the change in leadership evaluations, with the majority of responses being concentrated around no change and very few respondents dramatically changing their evaluations. As such, in this example wave, evaluations are highly stable. No change was the most common response for each leader, at least 40% of respondents in each case, indicating that a large minority of respondents had fixed views of the leaders. When no change is combined with a slight change to more positive (+1) or more negative (-1) feelings toward party leaders, it is found that a clear majority of the panel exhibit very little or no change in their assessments of leaders. In total, 75.5% of respondents for the Conservatives, 69.5% for Labour, 69.1% for the Liberal Democrats and 70.2% for UKIP fall into this range. The proportion of voters who radically change their evaluations of the leaders during this 'typical' period is tiny. Fewer than 3% of respondents changed their assessments

of the Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat leaders by a score of 5 or more. However, this number is slightly higher for UKIP, at 4.1% of the sample.

Figure 4.4 visualises respondent changes in feelings during 'transition' waves following a new leader taking office. The distribution illustrates considerable differences between these waves and those where leadership is stable. The most striking contrast between Figure 4.3 and 4.4 is the wider spread of values for the leaders. The greater spread of responses is illustrated by larger standard deviations for the Conservatives (typical 1.57 vs. 2.77 transition), Labour (1.69 vs. 2.73), and the Liberal Democrats (1.73 vs. 2.76) but not for UKIP (1.81 vs. 1.74). After change in leadership, a noticeable portion of voters changed their evaluations by two points or more (positive or negative): 50.8% of the sample for the Conservatives, 45.4% Labour and 50.2% for the Liberal Democrats. This compares to a noticeably smaller 38.6% for UKIP, with 42.7% of respondents expressing no change towards Paul Nuttall as the new party leader. Within Figure 4.4, the graph for the Conservative party is more positively skewed, with notable numbers of respondents having more positive feelings for Theresa May than David Cameron previously. This compares to the Liberal Democrats and Labour where the changes reflect a normal distribution, with negative changes and positive changes balancing each other out.

Figure 4.4: Change in Like/Dislike Evaluations During 'Transition' Waves With Leadership Change



Initial analysis therefore indicates that voters are more likely to change their evaluations of party leaders during waves with leadership change. More generally, a substantial proportion of voters' feelings towards leaders are stable, while there is a sizeable minority of the sample who shift their views between each wave, even when leadership is stable. It is observable from the findings that absolute change in individual-level differences are masked when examining aggregate likability ratings. While Tim Farron and Jeremy Corbyn were no more popular than their predecessors, there was substantial churn in opinions about them compared to their predecessors. The impressive shift in more positive feelings towards the Conservative Party leader after Theresa May assumed the role makes the effect more noticeable, as clearly seen on both the individual and aggregate levels. By way of contrast, there is no initial evidence to suggest evaluations change more during election campaigns.

Path and Mediation Analysis

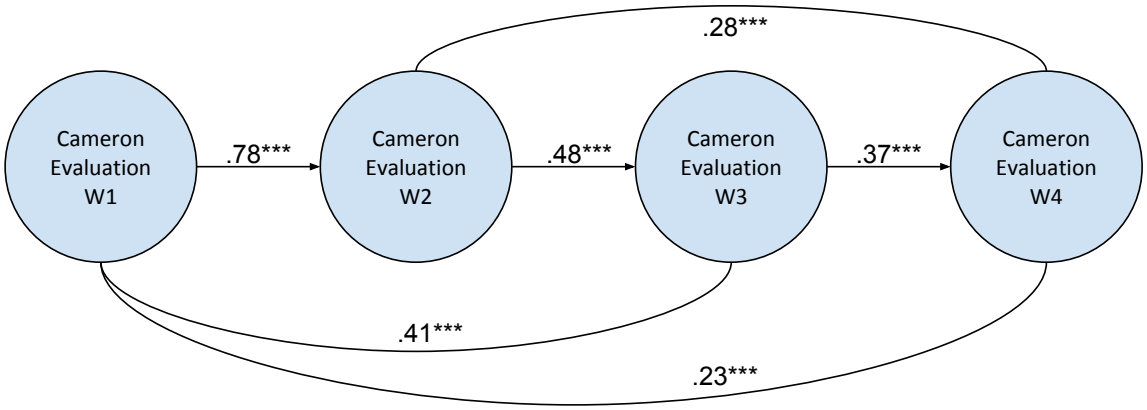
This section offers further evidence that feelings are fairly stable when leadership is also stable. Analysis from path models indicates that evaluations can largely be explained by prior evaluations about leaders. While I constructed path models that included all thirteen waves of the sample, they became increasingly difficult to interpret and provide no additional detail to the findings. Therefore, the models presented in this section are for feelings towards party leaders in wave four of the BESIP and are used here to illustrate the general effects. Wave four took place before the 2015 general election campaign, at a time when each leader had been in their role for over four years. I then compare these findings to waves where respective periods of leadership change have taken place. Each model is constructed using the same variables, the only difference is the time period. Leaders' like/dislike evaluation are used as the dependent variables.

Previous waves of leadership evaluations are used to explain evaluations in the 'current wave' with party identification, rival leader evaluations and age used as control variables. Calculating the indirect effects and total effects of variables provides an opportunity to examine how effects are mediated over waves. I demonstrate how prior evaluations are highly impactful on later evaluations. Results are presented in a series of figures, which only contain the direct effects from previous leader evaluations and are represented by arrows and curved lines. Full model outputs with control variables are accessible in the Model Output Appendix Tables 1-8. References made in this section to 'total effects' can be found in the tables mentioned above. For information on how these effects are calculated see Research Methods Appendix section 2.3. Findings demonstrate a clear disruption in the stability of leadership evaluations for the Conservative, Labour and Liberal

Democrat leader evaluations following leadership change. Similar to the exploratory results above, there is no effect from leadership change on UKIP leader evaluations.

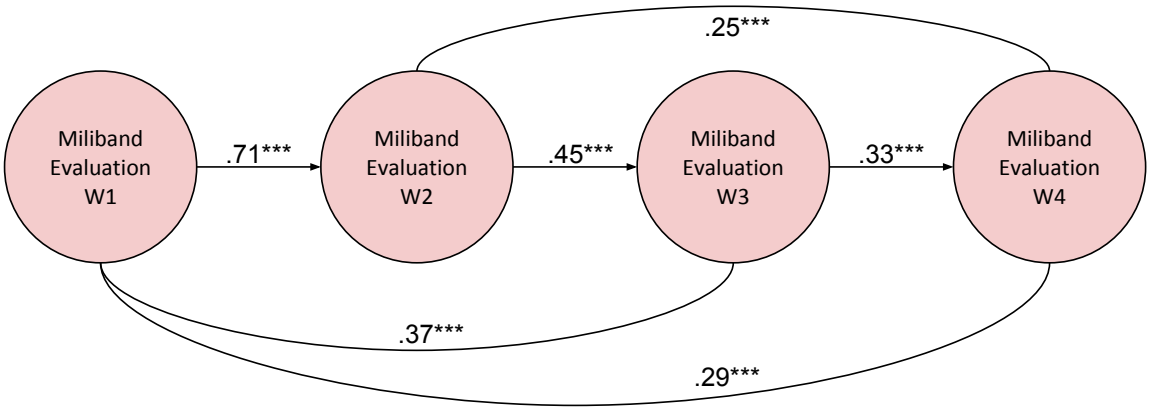
Figure 4.5 details the path model for Conservative leader evaluations for waves one to four. It details considerable stability in the model, with prior evaluations having very strong effects on current ones. Arrows between each of the variables in circles indicate coefficient direction and the standardized coefficient estimate is labelled next to it. Each of the previous three evaluations had a substantial effect in explaining leadership evaluations in wave four. The strongest direct effect on wave four is the evaluations from wave three. This is expected considering it is the most recent evaluation. Despite the differences in time, however, wave one and wave two, remain strong predictors of leader evaluations in wave four. Also, Figure 4.5 illustrates the importance of controlling for the effect of previous evaluations as the 'immediate' effect of wave three is smaller than the direct effects recorded before this. Each of the coefficients indicates that evaluations of David Cameron are highly stable with each past evaluation serving as a very good predictor for the next one. There are sizeable indirect effects from wave one (.14) and wave two (.18) evaluations on wave four in Figure 4.5. When combined with the direct effects, the overall effect of these variables on wave four is notably larger. Total effects of .46 are recorded for wave two and .37 for wave one, distinctly greater than the direct effects presented in Figure 4.5. This illustrates the long-term effect of previous evaluations of David Cameron on the final wave presented in this model.

Figure 4.5: Diagram of Conservative Path Model Coefficients (Waves 1-4)



Models for other party leaders reflect similar levels of stability. Figure 4.6 presents the findings for Labour. Although the size of the effects is slightly smaller than those found in the Conservative model, the results nonetheless demonstrate stability between waves. Indirect effects calculated from this model provide some further understanding of the long-term effects of leadership evaluations. The total effects of wave one (.41) and wave two (.41) are higher than the direct effects shown in Figure 4.6. This illustrates the long-term effect of leadership evaluations when investigating feelings towards party leaders, as evaluations of Ed Miliband remain highly stable.

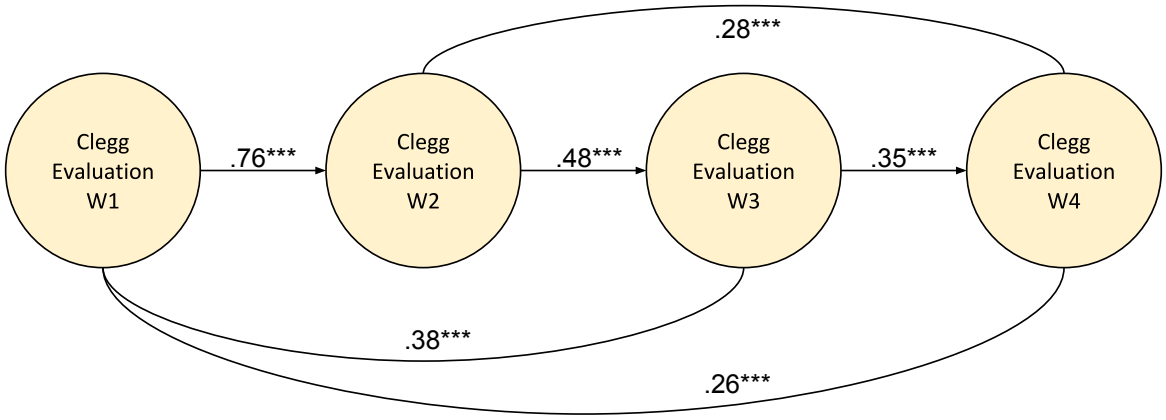
Figure 4.6: Diagram of Labour Path Model Coefficients (Waves 1-4)



Similar findings are found when examining the stability of leadership evaluations for Nick Clegg in Figure 4.7. Previous evaluations of each wave are again very good predictors of

evaluations in wave four. Once again, when calculating the total effect of variables in wave one and wave two on wave four evaluations, there is a greater effect than presented in Figure 4.7. The total effects of wave one (.39) and wave two (.45) are greater than the direct impact they have in predicting evaluations during the wave of interest. Therefore, waves one, two and three all have a meaningful effect in predicting evaluations of Nick Clegg in wave four.

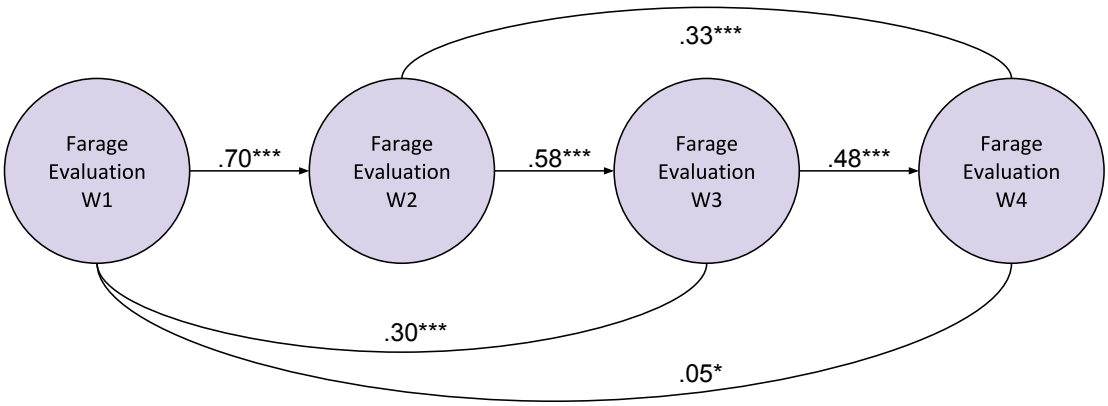
Figure 4.7: Diagram of Liberal Democrat Path Model Coefficients (Waves 1-4)



Lastly, for Nigel Farage, the familiar story of stability is mostly but not entirely, consistent with the previous models. Overall leadership evaluations are highly stable in Figure 4.8 but with one deviation from the other models. There is only a slight effect from wave one on wave four. The small effect is surprising given the consistency of results in the other models. Additionally, given the polarising nature of Nigel Farage, it might be expected that evaluations in wave one would remain impactful in explaining evaluations in wave four. A possible explanation for the weaker coefficient is wave two coinciding with the 2014 European Parliamentary Elections where UKIP were enjoying significant media attention and doing well in opinion polls. UKIP won the most votes and seats in the EU parliamentary election in the UK and it is possible their electoral victory caused a notable change in feelings towards the leader. As a consequence, feelings in the first wave were no longer significant in explaining evaluations in wave four. This possibility is reinforced by earlier evidence that

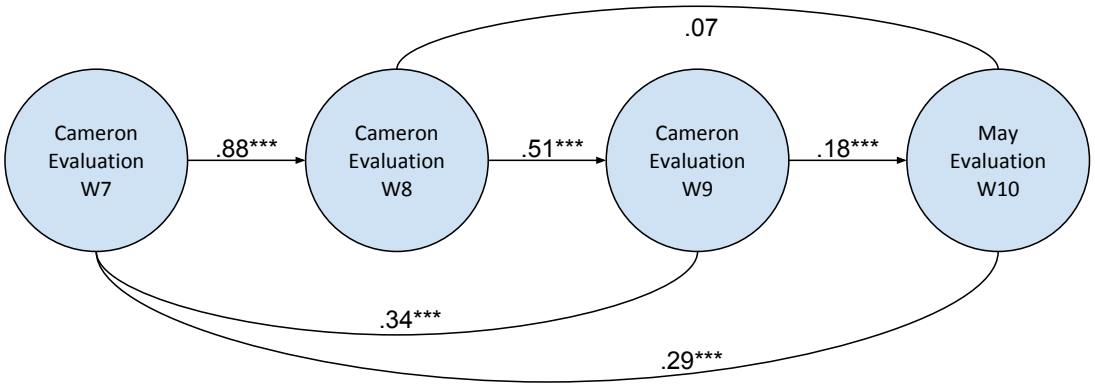
showed 61.9% of respondents changed their evaluation of Farage during wave two. Regardless of the slight difference between the UKIP model and other models, the wider findings remain the same: sizable coefficients from previous waves indicate stability across the waves included in the model.

Figure 4.8: Diagram of UKIP Path Model Coefficients (Waves 1-4)



Next, I examine waves where leadership change has taken place for each party. Starting with the Conservative model, I outline that there are critical differences caused by new leadership which disrupts the stability of leader evaluations. Comparing Figure 4.9 to Figure 4.5, the most striking difference is that the final evaluations of David Cameron in waves eight and nine have little effect in explaining evaluations of May in wave ten. The direct effect from wave eight is no longer significant, indicating a clear rupture in the stability seen in previous models. It is interesting to note that the strongest direct effect on evaluations of May in wave ten comes in wave seven. These earlier evaluations of David Cameron, measured during April-May 2016, had a stronger effect than in the later waves. Calculating the total effect of wave seven only underlines this finding further. In short, transition from Cameron to May provides notable short-term disruption to the high levels of stability in evaluations seen in previous waves.

Figure 4.9: Diagram of Conservative Path Model Coefficients (Waves 7-10)



Turning to the Labour model with new leadership (Figure 4.10), the model displays weaker coefficients than under typical circumstances. Direct effects are notably lower on wave seven, the first wave of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership recorded by the study. Weaker than usual effects are evident from wave four, five and six. This represents a level of disruption to the stability of leadership evaluations but not to the same extent seen in the Conservative model. Corbyn's new leadership of the Labour Party certainly causes a break in the level of stability. There is a similar level of disruption in the Liberal Democrat model following new leadership (Figure 4.11). The direct effect of feelings towards Clegg in waves four, five and six on Farron in wave seven are still noticeable but weaker than in the typical model. The model calculates that the short-term coefficient of Clegg in wave six to Farron in wave seven is the lowest direct effect. Further evidence is apparent when calculating the total effects of wave four (.25) and wave five (.27) on the dependent variable, indicating a greater effect from evaluations in previous waves. The long-term effect of leadership evaluations is again evident here, which may indicate that leaders of the same party are evaluated similarly by voters, but that new leadership provides a temporary disruption following the arrival of a new leader. Alternatively, long-term effects may indicate that partisanship continues to have a stable long-term impact on party leader evaluations.

Figure 4.10: Diagram of Labour Path Model Coefficients (Waves 4-7)

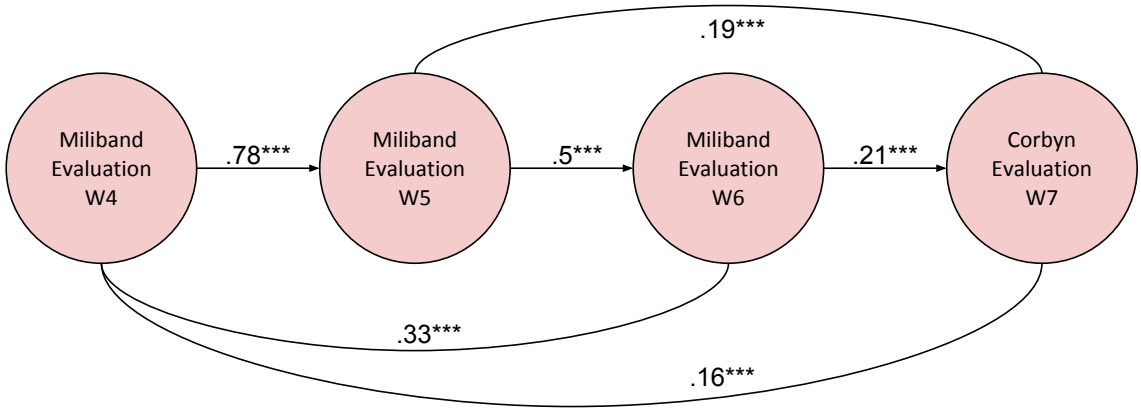
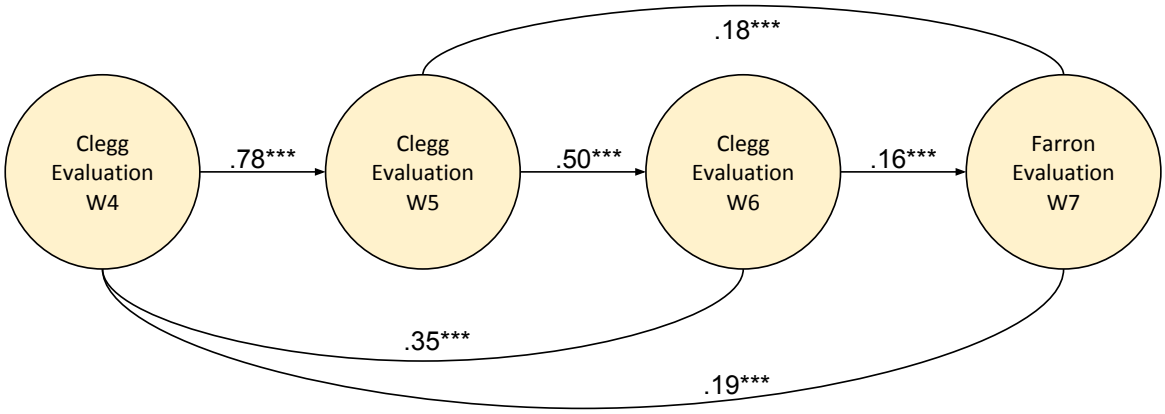


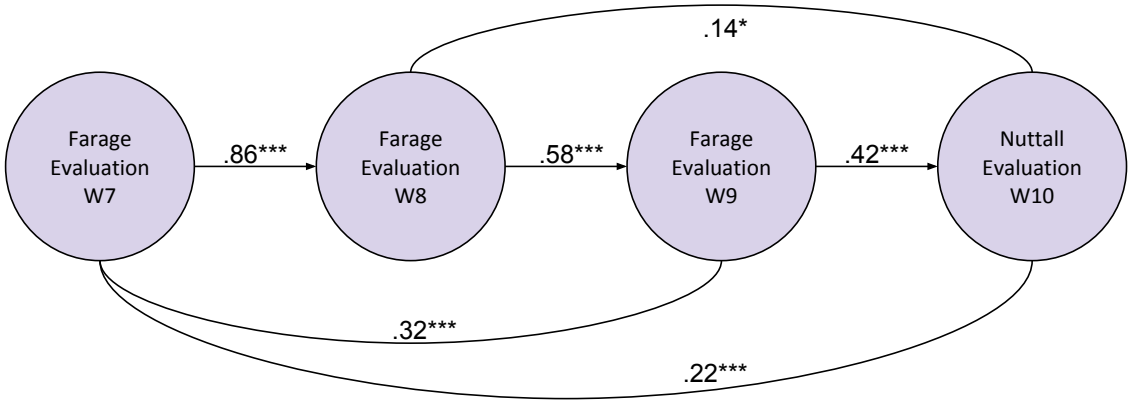
Figure 4.11: Diagram of Liberal Democrat Path Model Coefficients (Waves 4-7)



While results for the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat models are similar, the greatest disruption is in the Conservative model. The length of time between the last measurements of Cameron and first measurements of May is notably shorter than those associated with the leadership changes for Labour and the Liberal Democrats. As May became both Conservative leader and Prime Minister, assessments may have changed more and more quickly because of her greater prominence through holding party and government roles. Evaluations during the early months of leadership may be more fluid and result in greater disruption to evaluations but a larger sample of leadership change is necessary to conclude this. Farron and Corbyn had led their parties for nearly a year by the time the fieldwork had taken place to capture the respondents' feelings. Due to the irregularity of the fieldwork

dates, the full effects of leadership change for Labour and Liberal Democrat models may therefore be masked because considerable time has passed from when these leaders were first elected and when evaluations of them were recorded. Results also suggest that the initial disruption in the continuity of evaluations decays fairly rapidly as new party leaders become established in their position and evaluations from previous waves continue to have strong effects.

Figure 4.12: Diagram of UKIP Path Model Coefficients (Waves 7-10)



Lastly, turning to the UKIP model, when the leader changes the level of stability found in this model is highly similar to the first version of the model. Direct coefficients remain strong despite new leadership of the party. Waves seven, eight and nine all have significant effects on wave ten. This level of stability is reinforced further when assessing the total and indirect effects of wave seven and eight on the dependent variable. Strong indirect effects of .24 for wave seven and .21 for wave eight further underline the stability of evaluations. Therefore, there appears to be no noticeable change in UKIP evaluations following leadership change, confirming the differences between UKIP and other parties observed throughout this chapter. Considering the closeness of the relationship between UKIP's image and the policy of leaving the European Union, voters were likely to have such polarised views on the EU following the referendum outcome that leadership change would cause little disruption to

evaluations of the party's leader. Another important consideration that may have contributed to the continued stability in the case of UKIP is that 56% of panel respondents chose "Don't know" when asked for their feelings towards Paul Nuttall in wave ten, indicating that a majority had not yet formed any clear view of him. Those who did provide a score for Nuttall gave very similar scores to Farage in wave nine.

Table 4.3: R-Squared Estimates for each 'Typical' and 'Transition' Models

Party Leader	'Typical' Model	'Leadership Change' Model	Difference
Conservative	0.82	0.49	-0.33
Labour	0.75	0.45	-0.3
Liberal Democrat	0.69	0.31	-0.38
UKIP	0.73	0.56	-0.17

Table 4.3 provides a summary of the R-Squared estimates of 'model fit' for both the 'typical' and 'leadership change' models for each party. The table demonstrates consistent findings when comparing the typical and leadership change models for the respective parties. Each of the leadership change models are less successful in explaining the variation in evaluations for new leaders. The R-Squared figures from the typical models illustrate the models performance and reflect the strong coefficients that were outlined above. Values are noticeably lower in each leadership change model where variation in the first evaluation of a new leader was more difficult to explain. Similar drops in R-Squared scores are seen in the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat models, with the biggest difference actually coming from the Liberal Democrat model after Farron takes the helm. While there is a decline in R-squared figures in the leadership change UKIP model and the typical model, it remains the highest performer out of the four cases examined. These results illustrate that previous evaluations of party leaders are strong predictors of future evaluations under normal conditions, with the weaker fits of 'transition' models illustrating how disruptive leadership

change is, at least in the short-term. Differences in model performance provide evidence that supports the hypothesis that new leadership causes an abrupt change to otherwise stable evaluation of leaders.

Explaining Change in Leadership Evaluations Using a Multilevel Model

While the two previous sections of this chapter highlighted differences between waves of the panel, the focus in this section is about integrating differences between waves and differences between individuals in the sample. The dependent variable for each of the models is the *absolute* change in leadership evaluations. Multilevel models (MLMs) allow for wave and individual level variables to be modelled neatly in one model. Using binary wave-level variables, I examine whether new leadership and general election waves cause greater changes in leadership evaluations. This provides an opportunity to cross-validate the findings presented above. Voters with no party identification, 'unsophisticated' voters and voters that consume high levels of televised political coverage are all hypothesised to change their leadership evaluations more than other voters. A range of individual-level variables are included to capture these characteristics: party identification, political efficacy, consumption of televised political information and attention to politics. To investigate the role of party identification further I include interaction effects between party identification and strength of party identification. EU referendum vote intention/choice was included in the model because the issue of Britain's membership of the European Union was especially salient during the time period of the panel. Standard demographic variables of age, gender, education, ethnicity and household income variables were included as control variables. Lastly, I test whether changes in leadership evaluations are made relatively by voters through including change in evaluations of rival party leaders. Note that not all variables of interest

were included in every wave of the study, therefore some variables were time invariant.[7] This exposes a limitation within the data because some time constant variables will fluctuate in reality. For example, respondents' understanding of political events could vary over different times in the panel, but for the variable to be included in the model the available data was aggregated into a time constant variable.

Wave Level Fixed Effects

The wave-level effects of leadership change and campaign waves are summarised in Figure 4.13. Leadership change has the strongest effect in the Conservative model (.31), with new leadership causing a notable level of change in individual evaluations, compared with previous waves in the panel. Strong effects for leadership change waves are also recorded in the Labour (.22) and Liberal Democrat (.26) models, representing a strong positive effect as voters adjust their evaluations after a new leader has taken office. Party leadership change in the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour parties is the largest of any effect in the model, indicating that between-waves differences are larger than between-voter differences. The UKIP model shows no significant effect of party leadership change on leader evaluations. However, while the effect is insignificant, there is a positive, but noticeably smaller effect from Paul Nuttall's new leadership. The exception provided by the UKIP model demonstrates that voters do not respond uniformly to leadership change. The UKIP exceptionalism could be the result of a difference between mainstream parties and single-issue parties or Paul Nuttall's personal qualities as the new leader. Leadership change may therefore be meaningful in affecting feelings from voters in some parties but not others.

[7] This includes: Consumption of Televised Coverage, Political Attention, Political efficacy. For further information see Research Methods Appendix section 2.2

Figure 4.13: Wave Level Effects on Party Leader Evaluation Change

To analyse whether these effects were a product of the time period (2014-2017) covered by the BESIP panel or whether these findings are applicable more generally, I constructed similar MLMs for data on the nine wave British Election Study panel for the period 2005 – 2010. Again, this panel covered a time period where the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats changed their respective leaders. I do not go into the detail of each model here, but the model summaries are available in the Model Output Appendix Table 9. The results from leadership change waves are very similar to those found for the 2014-17 data. There is a substantial level of absolute change in leader evaluations and these effects are consistent across the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat models (data for UKIP were not available in this study). Such results provide further evidence, beyond the primary sample analysed here, of leaders being evaluated differently to their predecessor.

Other wave level effects included within the analysis test whether there is any substantial effect from leadership change in rival political parties or from general election campaign waves. General election campaign waves were introduced together and separately to assess any effects from the 2015 and 2017 campaigns. There is, however, no evidence that any combination of campaign variables had a significant impact. This is an interesting finding, considering the intensity of modern campaigns and the focus on party leaders. In particular, it is interesting that the 2017 campaign had no significant effect given the universal recognition that Theresa May's performance during the 2017 campaign was exceptionally poor, together with the strong performance of Jeremy Corbyn in the same campaign (Bale and Webb 2018; Cowley and Kavanagh 2018; Mellon et al. 2018). Additionally, there is no effect of rival leadership change stimulating change in evaluations of other leaders. Owing to the binary structure of these wave-level variables, this is not unexpected, given the strong effects found in the leadership change waves. The results of MLMs for the 2005-2010 data show similar results, with general election campaign waves exhibiting no significant effect in changes of leadership evaluations. This finding illustrates that while opinions of party leaders change often, the greatest changes in leadership evaluations over the panel do not happen during the 'short campaign'.

Individual Level Fixed Effects

Table 4.4 contains the full model summaries for each leader, including wave level and individual-level effects. Firstly, I discuss the results of relative changes in evaluations with rival party leaders. Next, I examine the effect of variables related to hypotheses 3a-c and discuss potential effects on changes in leader evaluations. I discuss the effects of party identification, before turning to political sophistication and consumption of televised political coverage.

Lastly, I examine interaction effects between party identification and strength of identification.

There is consistent evidence throughout each model to suggest that party leader evaluations are made relatively by respondents. Change in the evaluations of rival leaders all have a positive effect on change in the evaluations of the leader who is modelled as the dependent variable. The size of each effect depends on which leader is being modelled. For instance, in the Labour model there is a stronger link between changes in evaluations of Liberal Democrat and Labour leader evaluations, as opposed to Labour and UKIP leader evaluations. However, all effects are strong and significant, indicating the importance of rival leaders on how voters adjust their evaluations. Consistency in the results across the models provides strong evidence that voters do not adjust their evaluations of leaders in isolation but relative to the performance of the other incumbent leaders. Change in one leader is associated with change in all other leaders, demonstrating that voters are conscious of the available options for leading the country and judge each leader relative to their competitors.

Table 4.4 Full Multilevel Model for Absolute Change in Leadership Evaluation

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	UKIP
Wave Level Variables				
Conservative and UKIP Leadership Change	0.31*** (0.05)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.005 (0.04)	0.10 (0.07)
Campaign Wave	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.06)
Labour and Lib Dem Leadership Change	0.02 (0.05)	0.22*** (0.03)	0.25*** (0.04)	-0.03 (0.07)
Individual Level Variables				
Age (Scaled)	0.02*** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.003 (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)
Education	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)	-0.001 (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)
Gender - Female	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Income (Household)	0.004 (0.01)	0.005 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)
Ethnicity - Non-White British	0.04** (0.02)	0.001 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Labour Party Id	0.13*** (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	-0.001 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
Party Id Strength	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Conservative Party Id	0.14*** (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.09* (0.05)
Liberal Democrat Id	0.05 (0.06)	-0.12* (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)
UKIP Party Id	-0.02 (0.06)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.31*** (0.07)
No Party Id	0.07 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)
EU Ref - Remain	-0.02** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	-0.13*** (0.01)
Change in Labour Leader Evaluations	0.06*** (0.01)		0.13*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Change in Liberal Democrat Leader Evaluations	0.12*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.01)		0.07*** (0.01)
Change in UKIP Leader Evaluations	0.10*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	
Change in Conservative Leader Evaluations		0.07*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)
Political Knowledge (Trivia, scale 0-9)	-0.0001 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.005* (0.003)	-0.01** (0.003)
Political Attention (Self Described, scale 0-10)	0.01*** (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.0004 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)
Political Efficacy	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
TV for Political Information Scale (1-5)	0.01** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Interaction: Labour Id * Party Id Strength	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Interaction: Conservative Id * Party Id Strength	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.06** (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Interaction: Lib Dem Id * Party Id Strength	0.04 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
Interaction: UKIP Id * Party Id Strength	0.07** (0.03)	-0.05* (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Constant	0.24*** (0.06)	0.46*** (0.06)	0.45*** (0.06)	0.26*** (0.07)
N	27,022	27,022	27,022	27,022
Log Likelihood	-25,575.76	-27,069.33	-26,826.58	-27,308.00
AIC	51,211.53	54,198.66	53,713.17	54,676.00
BIC	51,457.66	54,444.79	53,959.30	54,922.13

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Effects from the socio-demographic variables were relatively small, compared to other effects seen in the model. The effects were also fairly predictable. For instance, younger voters were more likely to change their evaluations of Labour leaders, while older voters were more likely to change their evaluation of Conservative leaders. None of the socio-demographic variables had a significant effect in the Liberal Democrat model. Interestingly the strongest socio-demographic effect was that women were more likely to change their views of the UKIP leaders, while men had more fixed views.

Identification with a political party has a clear and significant effect on changes in evaluations. Within the Conservative and UKIP models, voters who identify with a leader's party are more likely to change their evaluation than those who do not identify with the party. This effect is particularly strong with UKIP identifiers and is the strongest effect in the entire UKIP model. Effects from party identification in these models indicate that partisans are most likely to change evaluations of their own leaders. Partisans may have closely followed the leadership elections of their party and already gathered information to make an assessment of the new leader. These results contrast with the rationale developed from the literature which suggested that those with partisan attachments would hold more stable evaluations of their leader because they are guided by their party identification to be supportive. The same effects were not found in the Labour and Liberal Democrat models, where results showed that their own party identifiers did not change leadership evaluations more than other partisans. There is no evidence from any of these models that voters with no identification, who were theorised to be the most susceptible to change, change their evaluations more than other respondents. These findings provide no support for the hypothesis that non-identifiers are more likely to change their evaluations. Indeed, in some cases party identifiers are more likely to change their opinion of their own leader.

The interaction effects between party identification and strength of party identification, provide further insight into the effect of partisanship on changing evaluations of party leaders. These results suggest that stronger Liberal Democrat and UKIP identifiers changed their evaluations of the Conservative leader more than weaker identifiers. This may be due to an incumbency effect because the Conservative leader was also Prime Minister throughout the waves covered in the panel. Stronger Conservative identifiers also change their evaluations of UKIP leaders more than weaker Conservative identifiers. This is potentially due to some policy similarities, notably Britain's membership of the European Union. There is some evidence in the Labour and UKIP models that the strongest identifiers hold the most consistent evaluations of their own leader, supporting the hypothesis outlined in Box 4.1, but the evidence is not consistent across each of the models. Distinctively, there are no significant interaction effects within the Liberal Democrat model. Interaction effects between party identification and strength of identification show no consistent effect across the models.

Effects from political efficacy and knowledge variables have varied success in explaining greater levels of change in leadership evaluations. Firstly, self-described political attention on a 0-10 scale has no significant effect, with the exception of the Conservative model, where those who claim a higher level of political attention are slightly more likely to change their views of the leader. It is important to note that political attention scores are skewed toward very positive values, with a mean score of 8.1 out of 10. This may be a consequence of panel attrition with more politically interested respondents remaining in the panel over multiple waves. Political knowledge measured by trivia questions produced similar results and only had a marginal effect in the Liberal Democrat and UKIP models. However, interest in politics and being confident about understanding political developments are not

mutually exclusive. Political efficacy, measured by asking respondents if they find it difficult to understand politics, has a more notable and uniform effect in each model. Those who agree more strongly with the statement are more likely to change their evaluations of each party leader (with the exception of the Liberal Democrat model). This finding provides some basis for 'unsophisticated' voter arguments, with those who find it difficult to understand politics being more likely to change their feelings toward leaders than those who profess to find it easier to understand political events. The effect is strongest in the UKIP model, suggesting that 'unsophisticated' voters adjust their leadership evaluations of UKIP leaders more than the conventional political parties. It is worth emphasising that only one of the three variables employed to measure whether voters are 'sophisticated' was successful in finding a clear result. Whether finding it difficult to understand political information constitutes being an 'unsophisticated' voter is a wider point of debate, beyond the scope of this chapter, but as outlined in the literature review of this thesis, the classification of 'unsophisticated' voters does not have uniform understanding among researchers.

Consistent evidence is found when modelling the effect of television consumption of political information. The effect is positive, suggesting that greater consumption of broadcast political news, which leaders dominate, influences greater changes in evaluations. Uniform effects are found across each model as greater exposure to televised political content is influential in changing the political opinions of leaders. Again, it is important to note that the effects are small relative to other effects discussed in this section. This finding fits with the hypothesised relationship, as these voters are likely to have significantly more information about party leaders and are able to update their feelings and re-evaluate leaders in the light of political events and performance. Therefore, the results suggest a link between consumption of televised political content and change in leadership evaluations.

Conclusion

Leadership change causes a substantial shift in otherwise stable feelings toward party leaders. If voters reacted automatically to new leaders using cues from the party they represent or from their predecessor, it would follow that little change in evaluations would be observed with new leadership. This means new leaders are offered an opportunity by voters to make a fresh impression and gain the support of potential voters. If voters' evaluations of leaders remain stable in waves after leadership change, then party leaders may have a limited window to persuade most votes of their capabilities. All these findings apply to the well-established parties of the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats but do not extend to the less-established UKIP. The UKIP exception highlights that these findings are not generalisable to all political parties, with contextual effects of single-issue and catch all parties requiring a potential caveat to these results. I further considered whether voters changed their evaluation leader in isolation or comparatively. Strong evidence was found in each multilevel model to provide further support for existing suggestions that voters evaluate leaders relative to their rivals. These effects were consistent and further strengthened the argument of relative evaluations, providing an insight into which factors voters consider to be important when they construct their evaluations.

Evidence was found to suggest that certain sub-sections of the electorate changed their evaluations of party leaders to a greater extent. Partisanship has a strong effect in the Conservative and UKIP cases but no significant effect in the Labour or Liberal Democrat models. In these cases, the results suggested that voters who identify with a party are more likely to change their opinion of their own leader than other voters. This finding ran contrary to the expectation that voters with no party identification would change their evaluations

more. Interaction effects were inconsistent when modelling the effect of party identification and strength of party identification. Crucially, there is no evidence that non-partisans change their evaluations of leaders more than partisans. Some evidence is found to suggest that 'unsophisticated' voters are more likely to change their evaluations of party leaders, albeit that the results suggested these effects were not particularly strong. This provides some evidence that voters who find it difficult to understand politics have more fluid evaluations of leaders. Lastly, there was consistent evidence that consumption of televised political coverage had a small effect on changes to leadership evaluations. Findings presented here suggest some sub-groups within the electorate update their evaluations of leaders more frequently than others.

Analysis of leadership evaluations in a panel data setting has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of change. Scarcity of longitudinal data that captured regular leader evaluations had restricted observing individual level change over a substantial time period. Even more scarce is panel data that covers periods that include leadership change. The irregularity of fieldwork and inconsistencies in questions asked to respondents were limitations to navigate. However, the analysis demonstrates the opportunities provided by panel data. Movements towards multi-wave panel data in election studies in the UK and beyond means that future opportunities to examine leadership change with more consistent fieldwork times are likely.

Findings in this chapter suggested that change in evaluations during general election campaigns were not significantly greater than the change observed in other waves, providing no support for the relevant hypothesis in this chapter. This finding is important to consider when feeding forward into the next chapter that specifically examines changes to leadership evaluations during the campaign. Evidence found here suggested that leadership change was

most likely to cause absolute level changes in leadership evaluations. Despite results suggesting there was no extraordinary direction of change during the campaign wave, the next chapter investigates whether the level of change observed in evaluations is significant to affecting voters' party choice.

Chapter 5 : Party Leaders and Campaigns: Masters of Persuasion?

Modern election campaigning is distinctly focused around party leaders, particularly the Labour and Conservative leaders who are the only realistic contenders to become Prime Minister, barring an unprecedented realignment of political parties. Given their high profile, can leaders persuade and convince undecided and disaffected voters during campaigns? Similarly, if leaders perform poorly, could they discourage undecided voters from supporting their party? Greater opportunities exist in modern campaigns for parties to influence undecided electors to vote for their party but, for such effects to occur, voters must be open to persuasion. Previous research has found little evidence of campaigns having a net effect on vote choice, as most voters ultimately vote for the party they intended to before the campaign began (Clarke et al. 2004; Erickson and Wlezien 2012; Finkel 1993; Finkel and Schrott 1995; Kalla and Broockman 2018). Other researchers have gone as far to say that the campaign merely funnels vote choice in a predetermined direction (Finkel 1993; Harrop and Miller 1987; Wlezien and Erikson 2002).

There is, however, good reason to think that greater effects could be present in contemporary British general election campaigns. A larger proportion of voters now decide their vote choice during the campaign and, compounded with weaker alignment to political parties, vote choice could be swayed by campaign events (Barisione 2009; Bittner 2014; Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012). Floating voters are desirable targets for political parties eager to maximise their vote. Ample opportunities exist for leaders to sell themselves to the electorate through televised debates and interviews which have become mainstays of modern campaigns (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013; Harrison 1992; Mellon 2016; Mughan and Aaldering 2018). Therefore, are leaders influential in persuading key sections of the electorate, including the much sought after floating voter, to vote for their party?

The following findings are presented in this chapter. Campaign effects were distinctively different for the 2015 and 2017 general elections. In 2015 few Labour or Conservative voters switched their party choice during the campaign, with most voters remaining with the same party they intended to vote for before the campaign started. Greater evidence of vote switching was observed in 2017 for Labour and was caused, to some extent, by changing evaluations of Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May over the campaign. I illustrate that persuading voters who were sympathetic to Labour but held reservations at the beginning of the campaign about voting for the party, were critical to Labour exceeding expectations in 2017. In 2015 and 2017, most individuals in the sample were considered unlikely to switch during the campaign because their vote choice can be accurately predicted with relatively few pre-campaign variables. After isolating voters in the sample who are most likely affected by campaign events, I find that changes in leader evaluations had a significant effect on those voters who converted to Labour or the Conservatives in the 2017 General Election. Differences in the strength of leader effects on vote choice were noticeably larger in 2017 for these Labour and Conservatives voters, relative to the size of the effects in 2015. Differences between the two elections suggest that leader effects can vary depending on election context, events of the campaign and who the leaders are.

Previous Efforts to Examine Campaign Effects

Studies of voter behaviour in the US and Britain suggested that election campaigns were unlikely to have a meaningful effect on voters (Butler and Stokes 1974; Campbell et al. 1960; Lasarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948; Schmitt-Beck 2007; Tilley 2008). The professionalisation of election campaigning and the emergence of television as the primary medium of political information led to a reassessment of campaign effects in the US (Schmitt-

Beck 2007; Sunshine Hillygus and Jackman 2003). An equivalent reassessment is particularly relevant to contemporary campaigns in Britain with the recent establishment of televised leadership debates and special televised political programs (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013; Harrison 1992; Mughan and Aaldering 2018). Leaders dominate these special campaign events. Moreover, the dominance of leaders in campaigns has occurred at a time where more British voters decide their vote during the campaign and a greater proportion change their vote choice from one election to the next (Fisher 2018; McAllister 2003; Mellon 2016). In addition, campaign effects are expected to be stronger if voters do not identify with a political party, are ideologically moderate or are relatively uninterested in politics (Barisione 2009; Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012).

Studies that examine the influence of campaigns on vote choice can largely be divided into two categories. The first group of researchers have used daily cross-sectional surveys to isolate the effect of specific campaign events on voters (Blais et al. 2003; Erickson and Wlezien 2012; Shaw and Roberts 2000). A second group uses panel data and seeks to measure individual-level changes in voters' attitudes over the entire campaign (Clarke et al. 2004; Finkel 1993, 1995; Finkel and Schrott 1995). Examining changes across the entire campaign holds fewer assumptions about how specific events affect the views of the electorate. For example, researchers have to consider whether respondents in their sample were aware of the campaign event and were somewhat knowledgeable about the details. On the other hand, analysing the election as a whole enables comparisons of campaign effects between elections. This approach uses information gathered before the campaign has begun, during the campaign and after the campaign.

These effects of reinforcement, activation and conversion have been used as the theoretical framework in a range of studies (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009a; Finkel 1993; Finkel and

Schrott 1995; García-Viñuela, Jurado, and Riera 2018). Reinforced voters begin the campaign with a clear vote choice preference and political information consumed during the campaign serves to reaffirm and strengthen their existing preference (Schmitt-Beck 2007). Some of these individuals may be considered the party's 'core' voters who are highly unlikely to vote for another party, but it remains important that these voters are mobilised to turnout in an election. The second effect is activation. Campaigns provide candidates and political parties with an opportunity to activate the latent political predispositions of voters (Finkel 1993; Schmitt-Beck 2007). As an example, voters who (1) hold attitudes or belong to socio-demographic groups that align favourably with the Conservative Party, (2) do not intend to vote Conservative at the beginning of the campaign but (3) ultimately vote for the Conservative Party are considered to be 'activated' by the campaign. The last effect is conversion, 'the holy grail of campaign effects' (Erickson and Wlezien 2012, 9). Convincing an elector to switch from one party (or from being undecided) to another over the course of the campaign is considered the most powerful effect, because it takes votes away from rival parties whilst adding to your own.

Like preceding studies, I focus in particular on conversion. However, I also aim to go beyond previous studies, which have mostly concentrated on how many voters convert during the campaign, to investigate why voters converted. It is important to understand the reasons why voters convert as 'converters' are often viewed as integral to parties maximising their vote. Voters that switch during the campaign are sometimes referred to as 'floating' voters. Some studies reference floating voters without any further description or elaboration of the term beyond an understanding that they are a highly coveted group of voters (Russo 2014). Others have been more precise, describing floating voters as weak partisans with no ideological leaning (Bearnot and Schier 2012). In other cases, floating voters are simply voters

who chose a different party in the current election than the previous election. Mellon (2016, 3) argues that 'If 40% of voters [in Britain] are changing parties every election, almost every voter is a potential swing voter'. While it is not necessarily the same voters who switch party choice between each general election, 40% constitutes a substantial amount of switching from voters. It raises the question of how many voters switch their vote choice during the campaign. Floating voters are unlikely to be one homogenous group within the electorate. For example, voters weighing up Labour or Green are likely to be different to those weighing up the Conservatives and UKIP. This approach points to an important acknowledgement; floating voters will have political opinions and evaluations before the campaign begins that will affect the likelihood of voting for specific parties. Therefore, pre-campaign feelings and opinions can help establish whether voters are likely to convert during the campaign. It is also useful to consider the circumstances in which campaigns are more persuasive to voters (Sunshine Hillygus 2010). Opportunities to persuade voters may be greater in some elections and less in others, for instance in a closely fought election between two parties of similar popularity (Erickson and Wlezien 2012). Similarly, the reasons for switching may vary in significance between elections, depending on the political actors involved and the salience of issues in the campaign.

Box 5.1 : Hypotheses for leader evaluations and campaign effects

How voters feel before the campaign will largely predict their actual vote choice.

Pre-campaign leadership evaluations have a strong effect on vote choice.

Changes in leadership evaluations during the campaign improve predictions of vote choice.

Most voters are unlikely to change vote choice, irrespective of changes in leadership evaluations seen over the campaign.

The effect of leadership evaluations will differ across voters and elections

Of the voters who do switch during the campaign, change in leadership evaluations explain this choice.

Voters susceptible to converting during the campaign will have moderate pre-campaign views.

Change in leader evaluations during the campaign will be more moderate in 2015 than 2017 and the effect of evaluations will reflect the level of change.

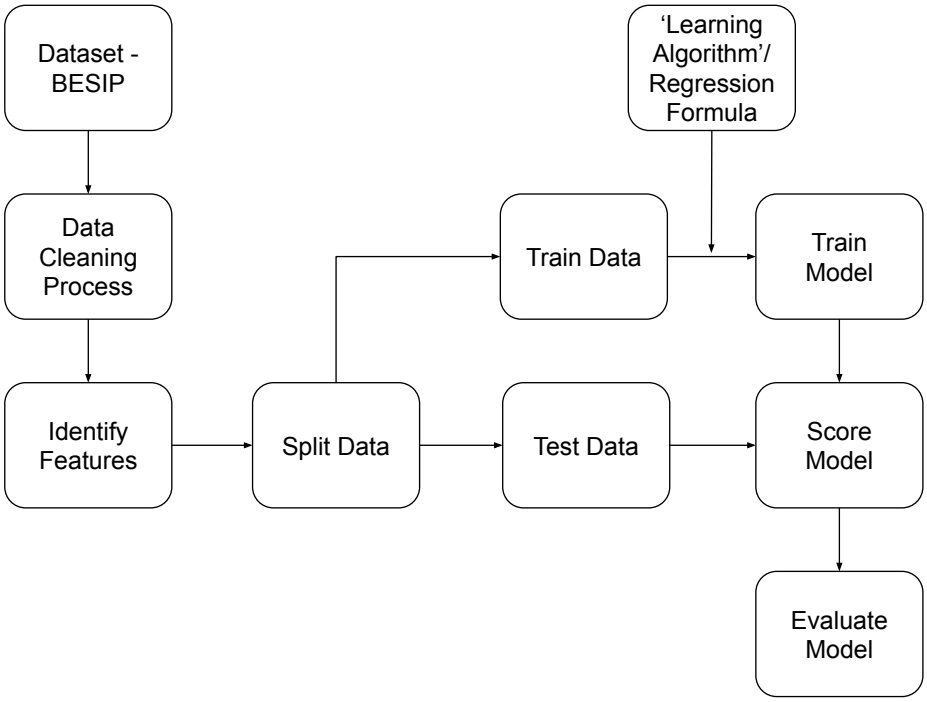
Approach to Data Analysis

The 2015 and 2017 UK general elections provide two excellent comparative case studies to analyse campaign effects. The campaigns happened during very different contexts (Cowley and Kavanagh 2016, 2018; Geddes and Tonge 2015; Tonge, Leston-Bandeira and Wilks-Heeg 2017). A crucial difference is that the 2015 election was projected to be a close and competitive race, with the two main parties exhibiting broadly equal popularity in opinion polls and relatively minor differences in policy. In 2017, by contrast, the Conservative Party was clearly more popular heading into the campaign and there were greater policy differences between Labour and the Conservatives, suggesting smaller leadership effects. UK general election campaigns are routinely covered in longstanding series that analyse general elections, but these are largely limited to the 'expert' interpretation of events, based on conversations with party strategists, media reaction to events of the campaign and aggregate polling data (Cowley and Kavanagh 2018, 2016; Geddes and Tonge 2015; Tonge, Leston-Bandeira, and Wilks-Heeg 2017). Relatively few studies have researched these campaigns and possible effects based on a focused analysis of daily campaign survey data (Mellon et al.

2018). To address this gap, I utilise the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP), using 'pre-campaign' variables, 'campaign' variables and 'post-election' vote choice to create a three-wave framework to predict vote intention and calculate campaign effects (Finkel 1993; Finkel and Schrott 1995). Additionally, I utilise the 'rolling thunder' design of the 2015 and 2017 campaign waves, which provides survey responses for each day of the campaign.

To make predictions about individual political choices at the 2015 and 2017 elections I adopt a machine learning approach. Predictive power is central to machine learning approaches, using information gathered from one dataset to make predictions about unseen data (Baćak and Kennedy 2019). I include Figure 5.1 as a reminder of the stages of a machine learning approach that was outlined in greater detail during the Chapter Three. A machine learning approach has notable advantages when making individual-level predictions and it draws upon advances in statistics and computing power (Lowndes, Marsh, and Stoker 2015). Advantages include greater reliability of findings through an extensive cross-validation process. In order to generate reliable findings, I produce 100 iterations of each model to check the level of variation after randomly selecting respondents.

Figure 5.1: Machine Learning Approach Flow Chart



I use binomial LASSO regression to construct models using a subset of the overall BESIP sample, a random selection of 75% of respondents that is labelled the 'training' dataset. The remaining 25% of respondents form the unseen 'test' dataset and the model attempts to predict the vote choices of these respondents. LASSO regression estimates smaller effects from predictor variables than in conventional regression, with the objective of constructing a model generalisable beyond the data that informs it (Tibshirani 1996). This approach gives additional robustness to the findings of the model because results are compared against different iterations. For example, comparing the size of variable effects across iterations to assess the overall significance. Producing the models through this approach provides an accurate assessment of which voters are likely to switch.

The dependent variable in each of the models is an individual's reported vote choice at the general election. I only produce models for Conservatives and Labour voters. Either

Conservative or Labour vote choice is placed at 1, with votes for any other party or not voting at all recorded as 0. One of the limitations of predicting individual vote intention through this framework is that these binomial models work best with a clear two-party system. As a result, model performance for vote choice for smaller parties was poor. This performance may be a consequence of supporters of smaller parties voting tactically in general elections. That said, Labour and Conservative supporters could still vote tactically, depending on the local election context in their constituency. I factor in respondents' assessments of how likely parties are to win in their constituency in order to account for the possibility of tactical voting. Since Labour and Conservative leaders are also the only likely candidates to become Prime Minister, their effects during the campaign are expected to be greater than leaders of smaller parties. Three separate models are developed, each with an increasing number of predictor variables in an attempt to improve the accuracy of predictions. This is done by starting with some basic indicators and then adding variables relating to party leader evaluations and 'campaign change' variables to assess any improvements in accuracy with additional information included in the model.

Predicted scores from the second LASSO model, which includes leadership evaluations and only contains pre-campaign variables, provide a baseline assessment of which voters are likely to be converted during campaigns. Existing research suggests the voters who are most susceptible to conversion could be influenced by changed evaluations of party leaders. I construct standard binomial regression models to explain why some of these key voters converted, whilst others did not. Variables that record changes to evaluations and feelings over the campaign are used to explain these decisions. In addition, I provide descriptive 'flow of the vote' figures to illustrate where votes were gained from and lost to.

An Overview of the 2015 and 2017 General Election Campaigns from 'Rolling Thunder' Data

The 2015 and 2017 general election campaigns were distinctively different from the perspective of leadership evaluations. There are distinct trends in the overall movement of vote intention and leadership evaluations in the 2017 campaign. Evidence shows that Theresa May and the Conservatives become substantially less popular over the campaign, with Jeremy Corbyn and Labour becoming increasingly popular. The 2017 campaign trends are replicated with partisan supporters, illustrating that Labour and Corbyn gained substantial ground with Labour Party identifiers, while May and the Conservatives lost some ground with Conservative Party identifiers. However, strong evidence of campaign change found for party identifiers is not replicated for non-partisans in 2017. Evidence from the 2015 UK General Election shows no consistent individual or aggregate movement over the campaign. In 2015 Miliband gained some ground among Labour identifiers, but not the decisive shift seen from Corbyn two years later. Attempts to sway the opinions of non-partisan voters decisively in 2015 or 2017 were unsuccessful for both parties. In this section, leadership evaluations are represented by dashed trendlines, while vote intention is represented by solid trendlines. Smoothed linear trendlines are layered on the figures to provide greater clarity in the direction of change over time. Shaded areas around smoothed trend lines represent the standard error.

Figure 5.2 provides daily vote intention and leader evaluations in 2015 and 2017 for the overall sample. The trendlines in 2015 are flat, indicating no trend in vote intention or leader evaluations during the campaign. When comparing where vote intention and leadership evaluations begin and where they end, there is little net difference in both values. For instance, average assessments of Cameron begin at 4.2 and at the end of the campaign have only risen marginally to 4.3. Small movements in evaluations were observed during the

campaign, but had all but evaporated by polling day. Results for the 2017 campaign are strikingly different. There are distinct linear relationships in vote intention and leadership assessments over the duration of the campaign. Labour vote intention begins at 27.1% at the start of the campaign and finishes slightly under 40%. This is a remarkable difference over 34 days. Corbyn's ratings increase gradually and, on average, he is more well liked than May by the end of the campaign. The inverse is true for May and the Conservatives, her ratings and Conservative vote intention both decrease steadily over the campaign. The trends in Figure 5.2 suggests that leader evaluations are linked; evaluations of May decreased while evaluations of Corbyn increased. Findings presented in Chapter Four suggested evaluations were made relatively over a three-year period, and these initial results suggest the same relative relationship during the campaign. Furthermore, trends seen in the graph suggest a very strong relationship between leader evaluations and vote intention.

Figure 5.2: Campaign Vote Intention and Leadership Evaluations for Labour and the Conservatives

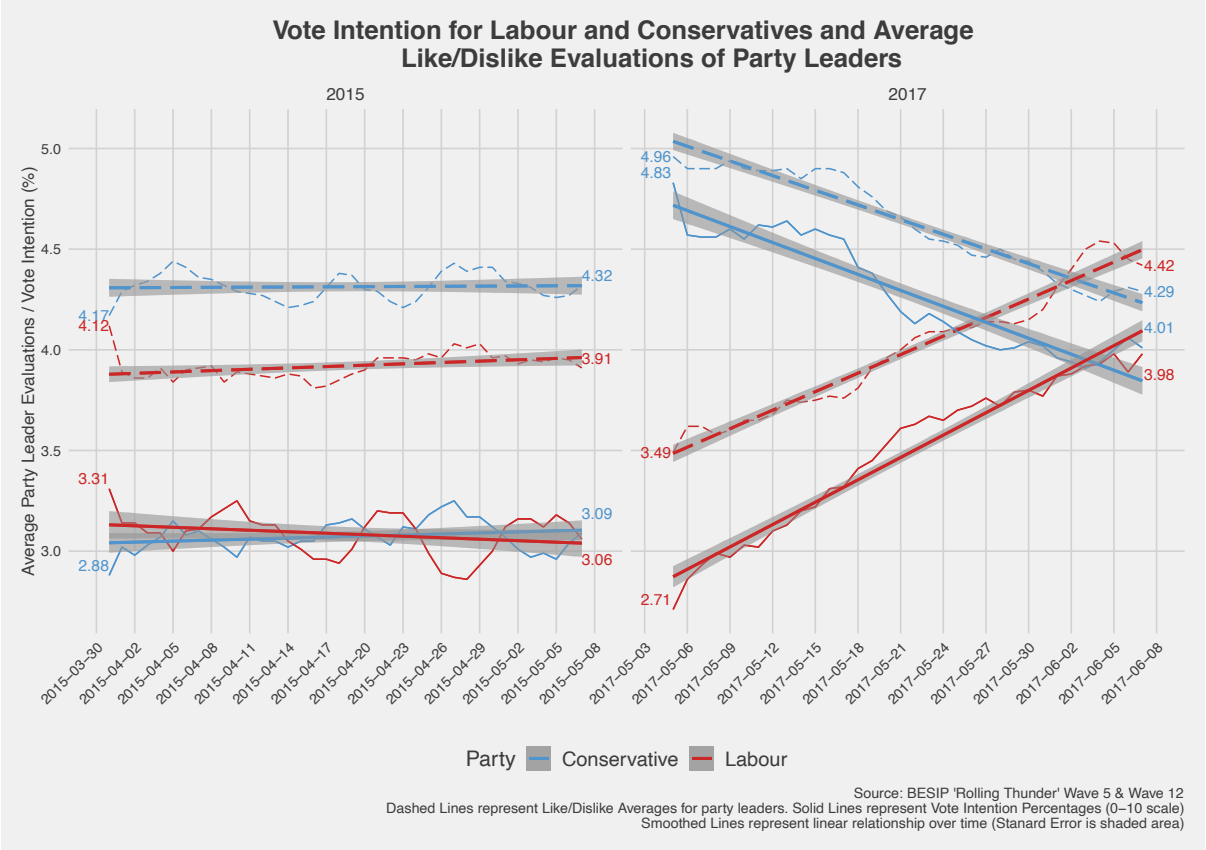
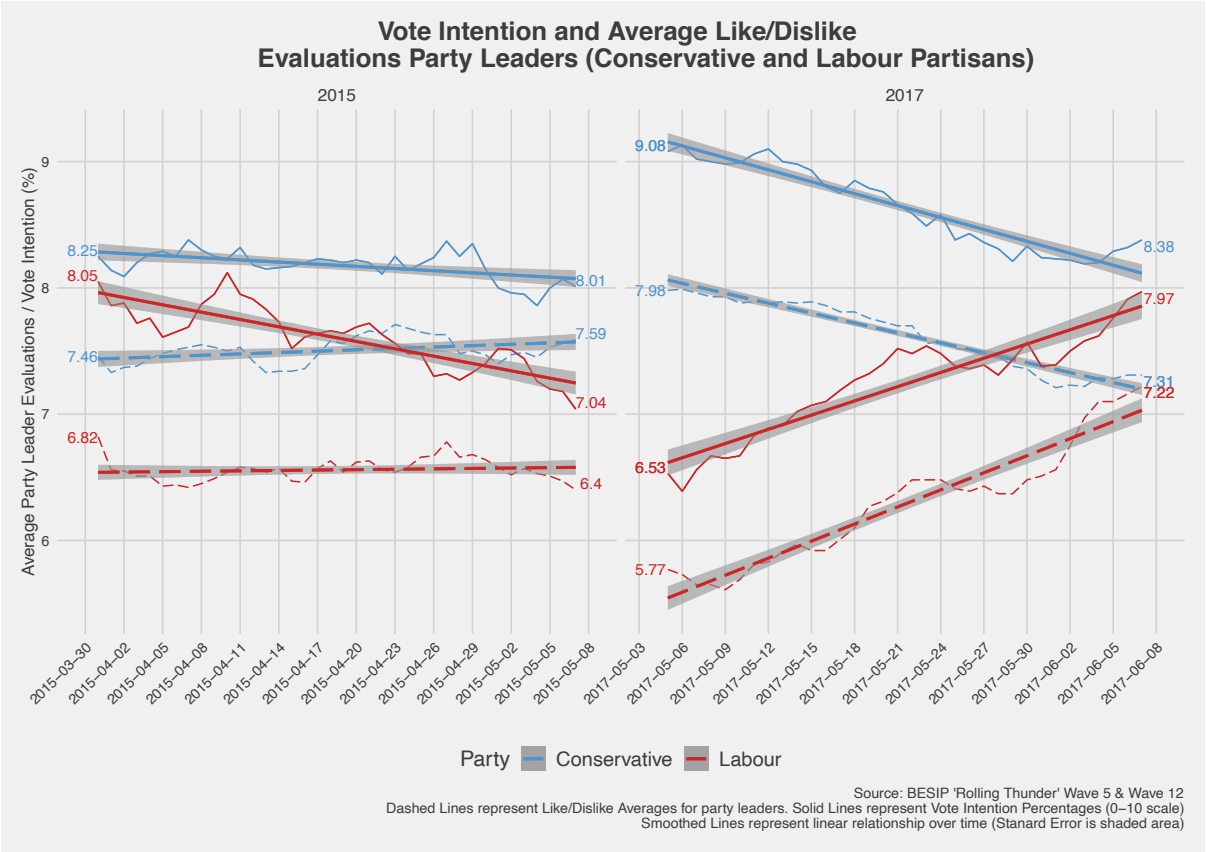


Figure 5.3 presents the aggregate vote intention and leader evaluations for very strong party identifiers at each election. Beginning with 2015, the familiar horizontal trends for Miliband, Cameron and Conservative vote intention are visible. An important difference between Cameron and Miliband is that Cameron was notably more well-liked by his core supporters, relative to assessments of Miliband made by his own supporters. Furthermore, Labour vote intention drops steadily over the course of the campaign, with 80.5% of Labour identifiers intending to vote Labour at the beginning of the 2015 campaign, but only 70% doing so by the end. Conservative partisans' vote intention for their party also drops, but only by approximately 2%. At the beginning of the 2017 campaign, May and the Conservatives have the support of over 90% of Conservative identifiers, compared to only 65% of Labour identifiers stating they will vote Labour. Labour vote intention increases substantially among

Labour identifiers, finishing 15 percentage points higher by the end of the campaign. Conservative vote intention among Conservative partisans decreases over the course of the campaign, finishing 7.5 percentage points lower. Similarly, core supporters' evaluations of their respective leaders converge over the campaign until they hold nearly the same standing with their core supporters by the end. Corbyn began the campaign with the support of fewer core supporters than Miliband in 2015. However, Corbyn successfully galvanised these voters during the campaign, indicating that activation effects could be highly important to Labour's performance in 2017.

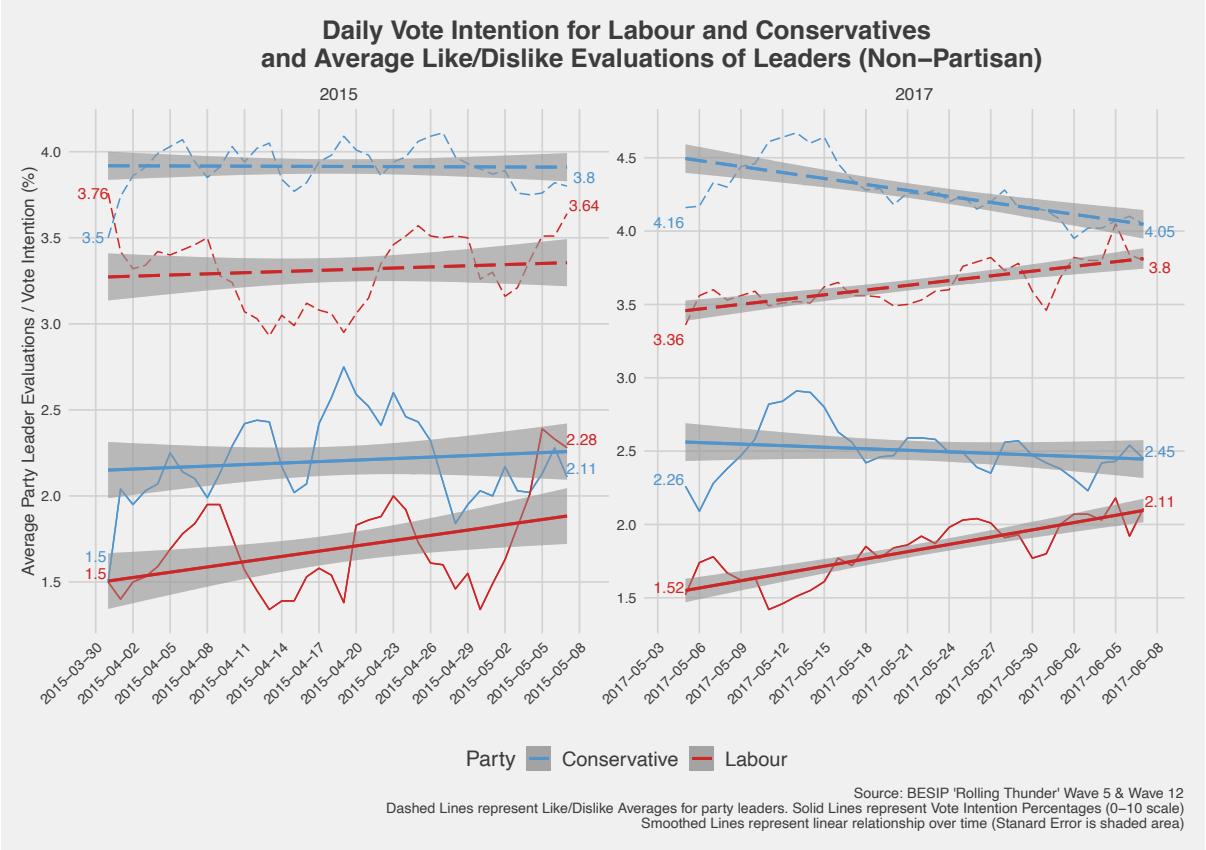
Figure 5.3: Campaign Vote Intention and Leadership Evaluations (Very Strong Party Identifiers Only)



Turning to voters with no party identification in Figure 5.4, there are much weaker trends across both campaigns. Cameron overtakes Miliband in evaluations of non-partisans during the campaign and maintains this lead until the end of the campaign. There is greater

variation in evaluations of Miliband over the campaign, but no net trend. Both parties increased their vote share among non-partisan voters by the end of the 2015 campaign but not significantly. Vote intention during the 2017 campaign follows a smoother trajectory. Labour vote intention increases slowly, as non-partisans are won over. However, the shift in support among non-partisans during the campaign (6 percentage points) is much smaller than that seen among partisans (15 percentage points). Fewer non-partisans switching to Labour may indicate that Labour's gain in the 2017 campaign was predominantly driven by the activation of partisans, already sympathetic to Labour. Conservative vote intention among non-partisans holds steady after an initial increase during the early stages of the campaign. Though May was widely criticised during the campaign for performing poorly, assessments of her by non-partisans changed relatively little. Such a trend implies that Conservative identifiers were driving high ratings of May when the campaign began, but this enthusiasm did not extend to non-partisans. Overall, the data presented here indicates a clearer relationship between the campaign and partisans in 2017, with little evidence that the views of non-partisans changed significantly.

Figure 5.4: Campaign Vote intention and Leadership Evaluations (No Party Identification Only)

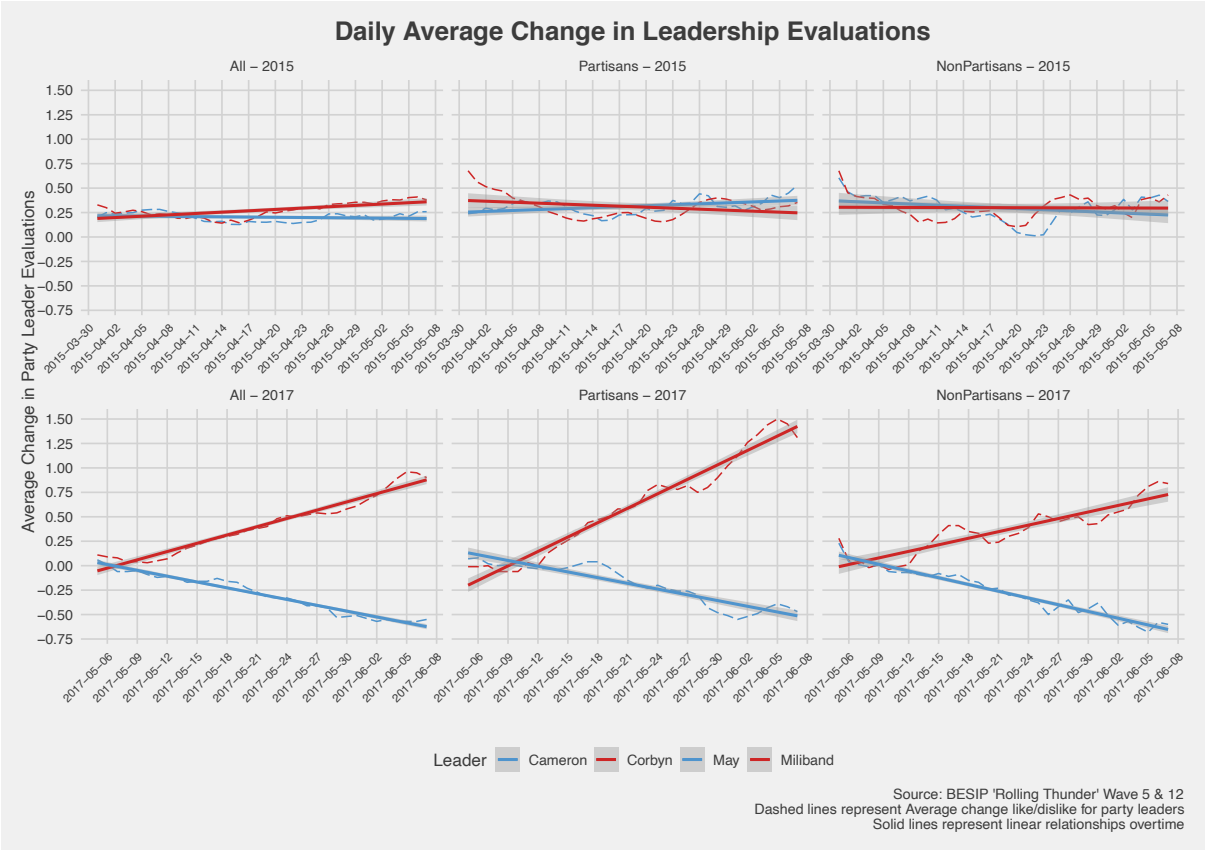


Many of the previous findings are replicated in Figure 5.5, which examines *change* in leadership evaluations during the 2015 and 2017 campaigns. Change in evaluations is measured by subtracting respondents' pre-campaign scores from the scores given when surveyed during the campaign. The graph is divided between three different groups: all voters in the sample, voters who identify with the party (which I label 'core partisans') and non-partisans (voters with no party identification). Trendlines for the 2015 campaign are flat across each group. Average evaluations of Miliband and Cameron increased by a small amount during the campaign, by around 0.25 points, with little variation between the days of the campaign.

In 2017 there is a clearer relationship between change in evaluations and the campaign, fitting a linear trendline very well. Evaluations improved cumulatively during the

campaign, suggesting they were not driven by individual campaign events. Moreover, there is a potential link between better evaluations of leaders and higher levels of vote intention. As the campaign progresses, more positive changes in evaluations of Corbyn are recorded alongside more negative changes in evaluations of May. A simple bivariate regression for all voters finds that each day of the campaign is associated with an average positive change in evaluations for Corbyn of .03. Labour partisans become steadily more impressed by Corbyn's campaign performance, achieving peak average change in likability of 1.5 points on the 5th May 2017 compared to the pre-campaign baseline. Voters sampled later in the campaign were more convinced with Corbyn than those at the beginning of the campaign. Trends in Figure 5.5 suggest that those most impressed by Jeremy Corbyn during 2017 were Labour supporters, as the gradient of the trendline is notably steeper for Labour partisans than for non-partisans. Conservative partisans give May lower scores as the campaign progresses, but the decline is not any steeper than non-partisans. These trends would be consistent with activation effects, though more tests are needed to clarify this.

Figure 5.5: Change in Leadership Evaluations (2015 & 2017), Split by Partisan Groups



Predicting Labour and Conservative Vote Choice at the 2015 and 2017 Elections

The previous section suggested that whilst there was variation, there was no lasting or impactful change in vote intention or leadership evaluations during the 2015 campaign. Conversely, there was a clear trend over time for these same measures over the course of the 2017 campaign. This section provides a greater test of these descriptive trends. I previously outlined approaches to examining campaign effects (reinforcement, activation, conversion) at the beginning of this chapter and these serve as the foundation for the approach taken here (Clarke et al. 2004; Finkel 1993; Finkel and Schrott 1995). The premise of the research design is simple. If vote intention cannot be accurately predicted from pre-campaign variables alone, then campaign variables should help explain vote choice. Predicted outcomes form the basis for calculating campaign effects, combining respondents' actual vote in the election and

their pre-campaign vote intention. With this information, the size of reinforcement, activation and conversion effects are calculated.

I develop three separate predictive models. The variables for each model are summarised in Table 5.1, with additional variables included in each subsequent model to evaluate the added value of new variables. Due to the binary dependent variable in these models, I constructed a party identification variable on a seven-point scale that ranges from a very strong identifier (1) with another party to (7) a very strong Labour/Conservative identifier.[8] Models 1 and 2 only use pre-campaign variables, with model 3 using additional campaign-change variables. Specific measures for each model are presented in Table 5.1.[9] Model performance is evaluated by cross validating the results across 100 iterations. These models test the first three hypotheses in Box 5.1 at the beginning of the chapter. Firstly, that evaluations of party leaders improve vote choice predictions. Secondly, that campaign-change variables of leadership evaluations improve predictive accuracy. Thirdly, that because of the change in the 2017 campaign discussed in the previous section, campaign-change variables will deliver larger improvements in vote choice predictions in 2017 than 2015.

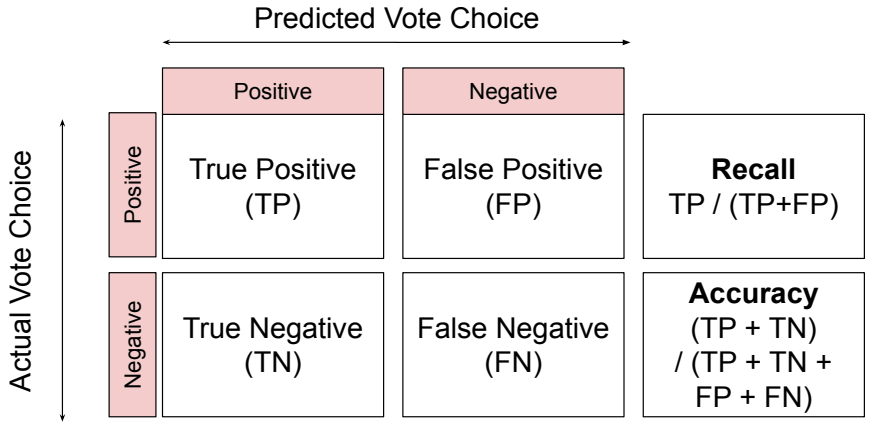
Table 5.1: Variables used in each Lasso model in predicting vote intention

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Pre-campaign Variables: Partisanship, EU Referendum Vote Intention, Previous General Election Vote Choice, Age, Education, Gender, Income (household), Ethnicity and assessment of the party winning in the respondent's constituency.	All variables in Model 1 + Like-Dislike Evaluations of Conservative and Labour Leaders	All variables in Model 2 + Campaign change variables: Change in Partisanship, Change in Leadership Evaluations, Change in EU Referendum Vote Intention, Change in assessment of party winning in the respondent's constituency

[8] See research methods appendix 2.2 for further information on calculating this variable.
[9] For further information on calculating changes see Research Methods Appendix 2.3

Constructing a confusion matrix of actual and predicted outcomes for respondents allows several measures to be calculated for evaluating model performance. In particular, I focus on the measures of accuracy and recall. Figure 5.6 displays a full confusion matrix and demonstrates how measures of performance is calculated. Figures 5.7 & 5.8 plot the accuracy and recall of predicted vote choice from respondents.

Figure 5.6: Example Confusion Matrix and Model Performance Measures



The accuracy of the model is plotted on the Y-axis of each plot. Accuracy gives an indication of the overall performance of the model, providing the percentage of correct predictions in voting Conservative/Labour and voting for a different party or not voting. However, as the majority of the sample do not vote for either Labour or the Conservatives, the accuracy measurement may inflate the success of the model. Recall measures the number of correctly classified Labour/Conservative voters relative to the number of actual Labour or Conservative voters in the sample. Recall is plotted on the X-axis to compare between the two measures. Calculating this measure is necessary to understand if additional variables improve both overall accuracy and accuracy specific to voting Conservative or Labour. In Figures 5.7 and 5.8 each model has a different colour and each party has a different shape. As the models incorporate additional variables, their predictive value should improve. The 100 iterations are plotted to visualise the variation in results. Averages for each model are

calculated and plotted. These are the larger and shaded points and provide an overall assessment of each model. Each graph is split between results for Labour and the Conservatives.

Predictions for 2017 improve as the model develops in complexity from the baseline in model 1 to model 2, but only a slight improvement is observed in model 3. There is a steady improvement between models 1-3 for 2015, suggesting that campaign change variables improved the accuracy of predictions in this election. This can be seen in Figures 5.7 and 5.8 as data points shift towards the top right of the graph. Accuracy for each baseline model is at least 85% or higher, signalling that the overall predictive performance of the model is very good but is less accurate when it comes to predictions specific to vote choice.

Figure 5.7: Percentage of Correctly Classified Vote Choice (2015)

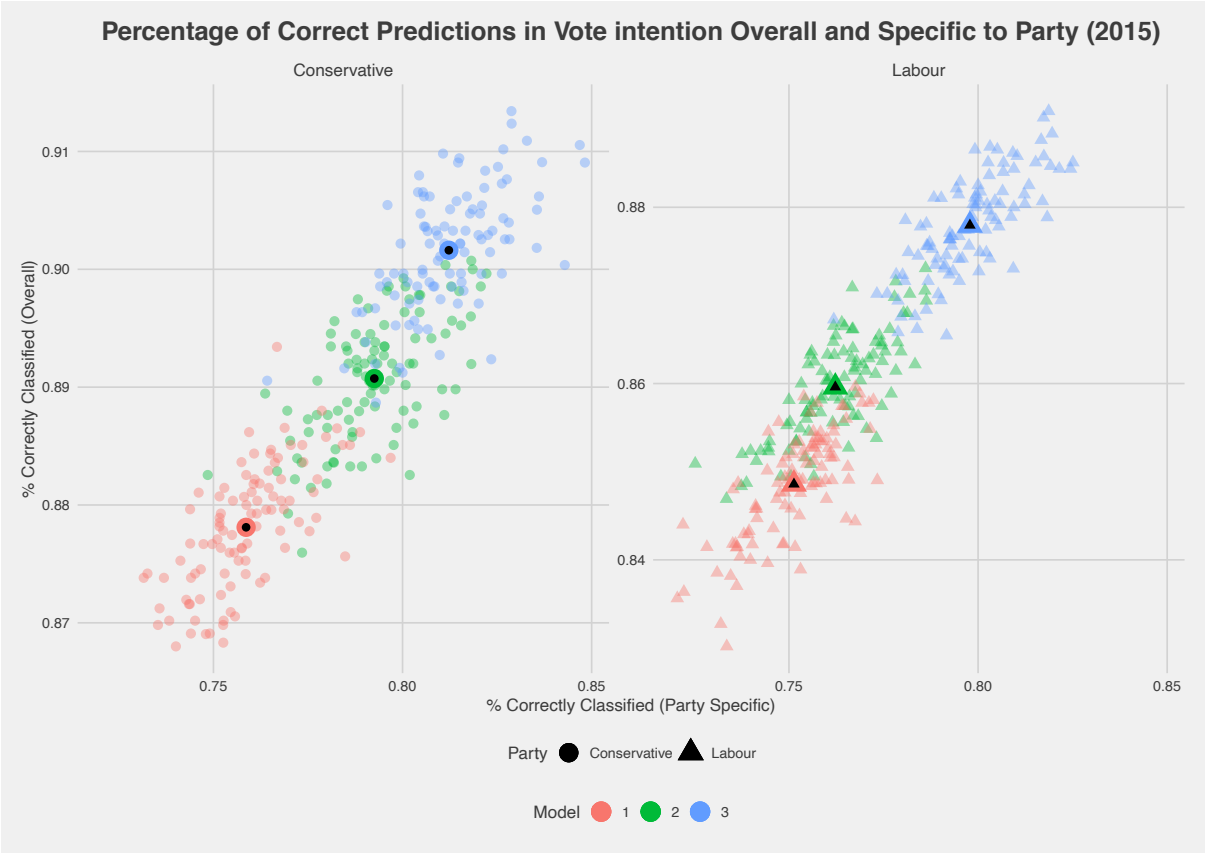
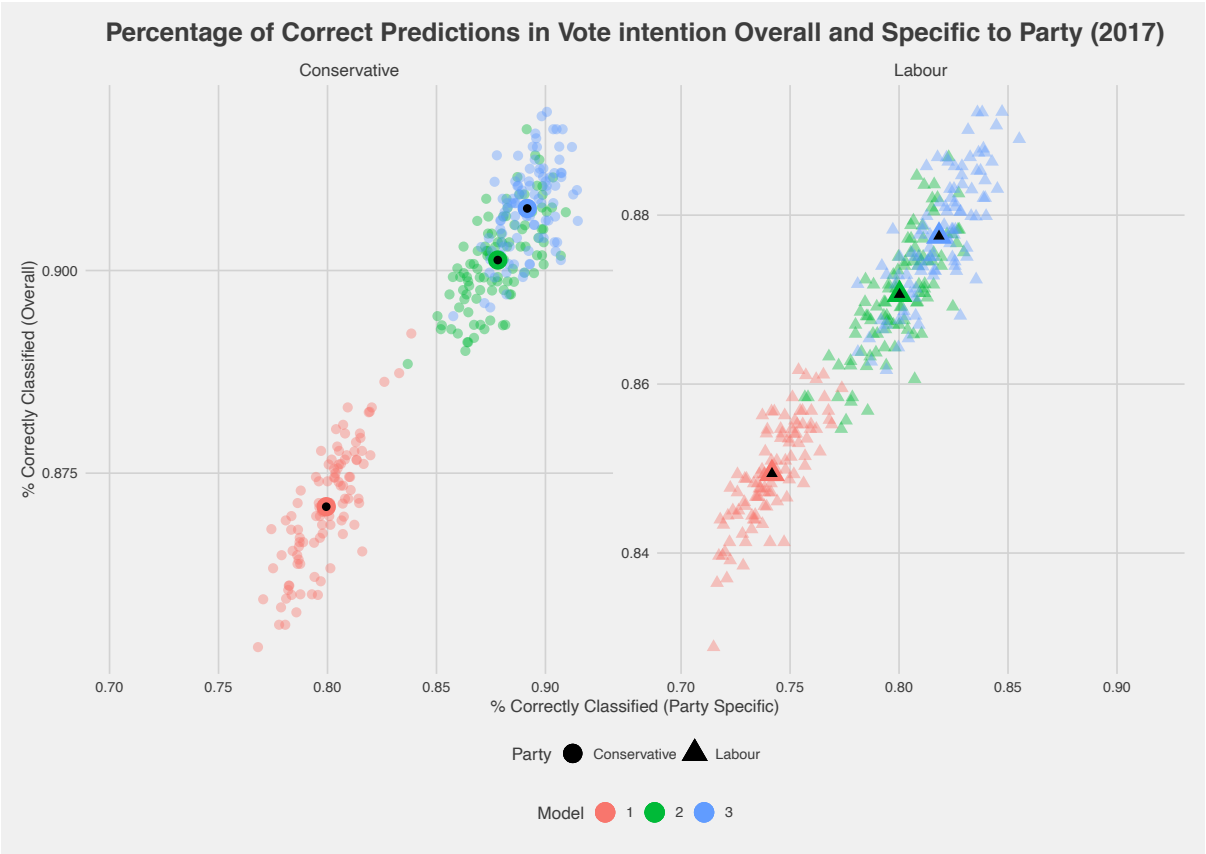


Figure 5.8: Percentage of Correctly Classified Vote Choice (2017)



The baseline model (1) is more inaccurate than the more sophisticated models and especially so for the Labour models. That said, there is certainly room for improvement as none of the baseline models exceed 80% party-specific accuracy, with this result consistent across elections and parties. These models are more successful in predicting who will not vote Labour or Conservative, with higher figures visible along the Y-axis. Interestingly, relative to the Conservative vote, Labour vote choice is more difficult to predict in both elections. With regard to the reliability of the results found across the models, results from the hundred iterations of each model are clearly clustered in 2017. There is little variation in accuracy across iterations, confirming that the model works beyond the sample it is trained on. There is, however, greater overlap between each model in 2015 but the averages for each model show a significant difference.

Introducing party leader evaluations to complete model 2 increases the predictive power of the model in both years. Evaluations of leaders provide an average increase in correct party specific predictions of 5.8 percentage points for Labour and 7.8 percentage points for the Conservatives in 2017. Smaller increases of 1.1 percentage points for Labour and 3.4 percentage points for the Conservatives were observed in 2015. Change in the accuracy of predictions is noticeably larger in 2017 than in 2015, suggesting that feelings about the two main party leaders were more important to vote choice in 2017. The findings demonstrate that the inclusion of leadership evaluations has a positive effect on party-specific predictions, in addition to leaders having a clear net effect on overall predictions.

The effect of introducing campaign-change variables is inconsistent. While there is always some increase in accuracy, the margin of improvement can be fairly insignificant. Minor improvement in accuracy is seen in 2017 for the Conservatives, where accuracy averages 90.8% in model 3, representing an increase of only 0.7 percentage points compared

to model 2. The inclusion of campaign variables improved the overall accuracy of Labour predictions by 0.7 percentage points too. More importantly, in Figure 5.8, some iterations of the second model outperform the third model, meaning that we cannot definitively conclude that campaign variables improve the accuracy of predictions. The differences between model 2 and 3 are clearer in 2015, especially for the Labour Party, where overall accuracy improves by 1.8 percentage points and party specific accuracy improves 3.6 points. The finding that campaign variables improve the accuracy of predictions in 2015, but not in 2017, is contrary to the hypothesised relationship. The previous section outlined the stark differences between the two campaigns, showing only a moderate level of change in 2015. In contrast, results for 2017, showed that there was a significant shift in opinions during the campaign but that recorded changes had little impact on the accuracy of predictions.

Results presented in Figures 5.7 & 5.8 demonstrate that campaign variables do increase the accuracy of predictions but that the increase is relatively small. Findings demonstrate that the models can accurately predict whether a respondent will vote Conservative or Labour based on their pre-campaign attitudes and choices. Based entirely on pre-campaign variables, 80-85% of Conservative and Labour voters can be predicted before the campaign takes place. While improvements from campaign variables were more visible in 2015, these variables did not decisively improve the predictive accuracy. This result suggests that campaign change variables do not have a decisive effect to improve model accuracy. In the next section I give an overview of the coefficients that inform predictions from the second model.

Model Coefficients

The following tables present estimated coefficients for voting Labour or Conservative at the 2015 and 2017 elections. It is important to investigate which variables explain the data and provide the basis of the predictions presented previously. These models are conducted using LASSO regression. Because estimates are calculated differently to 'standard' regression models, such as OLS, there are no p-values for each coefficient. Variables that would be deemed 'statistically insignificant' under traditional models are shrunk to zero in this model.[10] Instead, variables with a non-zero coefficient can be deemed 'statistically significant' in LASSO models. Continuous variables in the model are standardized. As each model was run a hundred times, tables present averages across the iterations.

Results from the 2015 model demonstrate that past vote choice, partisanship and leadership evaluations all have strong effects on vote choice. Voters' perceptions of whether the party is likely to win in the constituency have a strong effect in the Labour model and a moderate effect in the Conservative model too. In both the Labour and Conservative 2015 models, the effect of partisanship is greater than found in the 2017 models. However, leadership evaluations continue to have strong effects, particularly the effect of evaluations of Cameron in the Conservative model. The effect of partisanship is particularly significant in the 2015 Labour model, where it has the largest effect. There is a notable difference between the Conservative and Labour models when examining rival leader effects. In the Conservative model, where more positive evaluations of Miliband have a relatively small negative effect on Conservative vote choice, whereas more positive evaluations of Cameron have a larger negative effect in the Labour model. Lastly, there is little evidence that wanting to leave the

[10] See Research Methods Appendix section 1.6 for more details on LASSO regression.

European Union predicts Conservative vote intention in 2015. Although a majority of Conservative voters in the sample supported leaving the EU (58% in favour of Leave), this preference did not have a significant effect when predicting Conservative vote choice. There is a negative effect from wanting to leave the EU and voting for Labour in 2015, where Labour voters were more decisively in favour of 'remain' (73% of Labour voters). However, the effect of the socio-demographic variables that were significant was negligible relative to other effects in the model.

Table 5.2: Labour Vote Choice (2015) - LASSO Model Coefficients

Variable	Mean Coefficient
Intercept	-1.22
Age	.0011
Education	.0002
Gender - Female	.0139
Household Income	0
Ethnicity – Non-White British	.0005
Vote Leave W4	-.250
Labour Partisanship (0-7)	1.03
Like Miliband (0-10)	.799
Like Cameron (0-10)	-.519
Vote 2010 Labour	.594
Respondent's Assessment Labour Will Win Constituency	.236

Table 5.3: Conservative Vote Choice (2015) - LASSO Model Coefficients

Variable	Mean Coefficient
Intercept	-1.85
Age	0
Education	0
Gender - Female	.0023
Household Income	.0037
Ethnicity – Non-White British	.001
Vote Leave W4	0
Conservative Partisanship (0-7)	.899
Like Miliband (0-10)	-.321
Like Cameron (0-10)	1.15
Vote 2010 Conservative	.705
Respondent's Assessment Conservatives Will Win Constituency	.160

Models for Labour and Conservative vote choice in 2017 have several consistent features. Firstly, voting Labour or Conservative at the previous election has a substantial effect in each model. This finding is unsurprising, with most voters who voted Labour or Conservative in 2015 doing so again in 2017 and the effect is stronger than previous vote choice for the 2010 General Election in the 2015 models. Leadership evaluations also have notable effects in explaining Labour or Conservative vote choice and there is stronger evidence of relative effects in both 2017 models. In this instance, more positive feelings about Corbyn have a negative effect on voting Conservative, while more positive feelings of May have a negative effect on voting Labour. Effects of leadership evaluations are stronger in the Conservative model than in the Labour model. Partisanship has a strong effect in both models, but this effect is weaker than leadership evaluations in both models. Results across both models in 2017 show that age has only a minor effect, suggesting that age is mediated by the different variables included in the model. One noticeable difference between the two models in 2017, is the effect of 'Leave' vote intention in an EU referendum. Using respondents' actual EU referendum vote choice would, of course, not be possible in 2015 and keeps the variables

used consistent across each model.[11] There is a clear 'Leave' effect in voting Conservative but in the Labour model there is no observable 'remain' effect on vote choice. Another noticeable difference is respondents' assessment of whether the party is likely to win in their constituency. There is a stronger effect in the Labour model: if voters think Labour has a better chance of winning in their constituency, they are more likely to vote for the party. Similar to the effects in 2015, socio-demographic variables had very minor or insignificant effects in 2017.

Table 5.4: Labour Vote Choice (2017) - LASSO Model Coefficients

Variable	Mean Coefficient
Intercept	-1.21
Age	-.038
Education	0
Gender	0
Household Income	0
Ethnicity – Non-White British	.0007
Vote Leave W11	-.026
Labour Partisanship (0-7)	.670
Like Corbyn	.769
Like May	-.542
Vote 2015 Labour	1.49
Respondent's Assessment Labour Will Win Constituency	.230

[11] Additionally, this variable describes how respondents felt about the issue on the eve of the campaign, allowing changes that occurred during the campaign to be recorded.

Table 5.5: Conservative Vote Choice (2017) - LASSO Model Coefficients

Variable	Mean Coefficient
Intercept	-1.86
Age	-.0007
Education	-.0003
Gender	0
Household Income	0
Ethnicity – Non-White British	0
Vote Leave W11	.954
Conservative Partisanship (0-7)	.693
Like Corbyn	-.681
Like May	1.2
Vote 2015 Conservative	1.36
Respondent's Assessment Labour Will Win Constituency	.009

Estimating the size of campaign effects: Reinforcement, Activation and Conversion

By using the predicted vote choice from the second model, which uses pre-campaign variables and knowing the actual vote choice of the sample, voters can be separated into the effects of conversion, activation and reinforcement. Finkel (1993) outlines a clear approach for prescribing campaign effects to voters. Pre-campaign vote intention, model prediction and actual vote choice are used to produce a matrix of campaign effects. If a voter intends to vote Labour at the beginning of the campaign, is predicted to do so by the model, and does so in the election this is classified as an instance of reinforcement. Where the model is incorrect in its prediction, but voters are consistent in their vote choice, they are prescribed a reinforcement effect because these individuals were consistent in their vote intention before the campaign and voted for the same party in the election. If the model predicts an individual will vote Labour and they report voting Labour in the post-election wave, but their pre-campaign vote is undecided or for a different party, these voters are considered to be "activated" by the campaign. Lastly, conversion is when voters express an intention to vote

for a different party pre-campaign, are not predicted to vote for a party based on the pre-campaign model but end up supporting that party.

Table 5.6: Campaign effects of Conservative Voters (2015)

Pre-Campaign Vote Intention	Model Predicts Conservative Vote	Model Predicts Other Party Vote
Conservative	73% - Reinforcement	9.5% - Reinforcement
Other Party	5.4% - Activation	8.5% - Conversion
Undecided	1.2% - Activation	2.4% - Conversion

Table 5.7: Campaign effects of Labour Voters (2015)

Pre-Campaign Vote Intention	Model Predicts Labour Vote	Model Predicts Other Party Vote
Labour	73.5% - Reinforcement	13% - Reinforcement
Other Party	3.5% - Activation	6.8% - Conversion
Undecided	.9% - Activation	2.3% - Conversion

In this section I first describe the results of the 2015 election before turning to the 2017 election. Campaign effects in the 2015 election are fairly uniform across Conservative and Labour voters. The overwhelming majority of voters were reinforced or unaffected by the 2015 campaign. This totals 85.7% of Labour voters and 82.8% of Conservative voters, illustrating that most voters had already decided which party they would vote for prior to the campaign. Activation only accounted for a small proportion (4.4%) of eventual Labour voters. Labour was more successful in persuading voters to convert to their cause over the campaign which constituted 10% of their final vote. While Labour persuaded voters during the 2015 election, the Conservatives converted a similar percentage, accounting for 10.9% of their final vote. Conversion did take place during the 2015 campaign, but with similar gains made by both parties, gains were likely cancelled out by the rival party. This supports the narrative

that, even though there was evidence of conversion and activation, ultimately there was no net effect from the 2015 campaign.

The voting profiles of Labour and Conservative converters and activators were understandably different in 2015. Of all Conservative activators, 61% intended to vote UKIP before the campaign began, with only 17.9% being undecided before the campaign. This potentially illustrates the attraction of the Conservative Party's promise of an in/out referendum on the UK's membership of the EU if it won a parliamentary majority in 2015. Conservative converters mostly intended to vote Labour (27.3%), UKIP (21.1%), Liberal Democrat (18.7%) or were undecided (22.1%) in the pre-campaign wave, with these groups making up 89.2% of Conservative converters. The remainder of converters came from smaller parties or those not intending to vote at the beginning of the campaign. Figures for Labour converters were slightly less concentrated than the Conservative figures, with Labour converting voters from the Conservatives (13.4%), Liberal Democrats (16.4%), UKIP (16.6%), Green (18.6%) and undecided (25.3%). Of the small proportion (4.4%) of Labour voters that were activated during the campaign, 20.6% were undecided, 26.8% intended to vote UKIP, and a further 20.7% to vote for the Green Party.

Table 5.8: Campaign effects of Conservative Voters (2017)

Pre-Campaign Vote Intention	Model Predicts Conservative Vote	Model Predicts Other Party Vote
Conservative	81.3% - Reinforcement	7.4% - Reinforcement
Other Party	3.5% - Activation	4.3% - Conversion
Undecided	2% - Activation	1.4% - Conversion

Table 5.9: Campaign effects of Labour Voters (2017)

Pre-Campaign Vote Intention	Model Predicts Labour Vote	Model Predicts Other Party Vote
Labour	63.4% - Reinforcement	4.3% - Reinforcement
Other Party	9.9% - Activation	14.5% - Conversion
Undecided	4.3% - Activation	3.5% - Conversion

Campaign effects vary noticeably between the two parties at the 2017 election, reflecting the substantial changes in vote intention and leader evaluations seen over the campaign and presented earlier in this chapter. The Conservative vote in 2017 is heavily concentrated in reinforcement. A total of 88.7% of Conservative voters intended to vote Conservative before the campaign, meaning that the party activated or converted 11.3% of their final vote during the campaign. Conservative vote intention was high before the campaign, with over 40% of the sample intended to vote for the party, illustrating how the overwhelming majority of Conservative voters stuck with the party from the beginning of the campaign. This is reinforced by the aggregate data, which showed that 40.6% of the sample intended to vote Conservative prior to the campaign and 40% indicated they had done so in the post-election wave. Using pre-campaign vote intention data, we can examine where activated and converted voters were gained from in 2017. Conservative converts mainly intended to vote UKIP (41.1%) or Liberal Democrat (18.1%) before the campaign or were undecided (24.9%). Conservative activators were primarily gained from similar sources as their converters, with 38.8% coming from UKIP, 36.2% undecided and 11.7% from Liberal Democrats.

Results show the majority of Labour's voters were reinforced during the campaign (67.7% of their total vote), but this was much lower than the Conservatives in 2017 and both

parties in 2015. In turn, Labour activated and converted a significant percentage of its eventual voters; a remarkable 32.3% of the Labour vote was gained during the campaign. A total of 14.2% of the sample were 'activated' by the events of the campaign and this corresponds with accounts in the literature that Labour's campaign strategy focussed on recapturing former voters who were disillusioned with the party prior to the campaign (Goes 2018). Based on their pre-campaign attitudes, the model predicted these respondents would be Labour voters, indicating that Labour was successful in activating their pre-dispositions during the campaign. Labour activators were predominantly undecided (30.4%) or intending to vote Liberal Democrat (30.3%) before the campaign, with smaller numbers gained from the Conservatives (17.6%) and the Green Party (10.2%). Ultimately, the Labour campaign reassured voters with sympathetic views to return to the party. A further 18% of Labour voters were classified as being converted by Labour's campaign because they were not considered likely Labour voters. Labour converted voters from a range of parties, but most commonly from the Conservative Party (31.4% of Labour converters). Taking votes directly away from the Conservatives in this way during the campaign was highly effective as, in addition to increasing the Labour total, it took votes away from their main rival. This may have been especially important as Labour gained 28 seats from the Conservatives in the 2017 General Election. The notable proportion of voters who were converted illustrated how pivotal the campaign was to Labour's performance in 2017. The other pre-campaign vote intentions of Labour converters were Liberal Democrat (27.7%), undecided (19.4%) and UKIP (8.5%). The success of the Labour campaign in 2017 is evident when examining the number of voters persuaded. Critically, this effect is observed in conjunction with activating natural Labour supporters. The combination of these campaign effects led to the better than expected election results in 2017.

Isolating Persuadable Voters

There are several limitations associated with producing categorical matrixes, like those above, when understanding campaign effects. Firstly, the results above can only assign possible campaign effects to voters and make an assessment about the size of effects. While this exercise provides an informative overview, it cannot explain why voters converted, nor does it provide an understanding about whether voters' attitudes actually changed during the campaign. Examining the variables that capture campaign change would lead to a better understanding of how likely voters are to convert or activate during the campaign. Instead, the approach assumes that changes have occurred and also the reasons why voters who were converted and activated changed their vote choice. Without additional tests there would be no certainty that changed opinions affected vote choice.

More robust testing is conducted in this section to examine whether persuadable voters changed their views during the campaign and led to strong effects on voting Conservative or Labour. Due to sample size constraints and research design limitations, such analysis would not have yielded any useful results in previous research because these voters formed only a small sub-section of the samples (Clarke et al. 2004; Finkel 1993; Finkel and Schrott 1995). As such, the larger and richer sample from the 2014-17 BES Internet Panel study provided an opportunity to examine predicted values in greater detail. I explore the spread of predicted values produced by model 2, using these values to identify voters who are most likely to be influenced during the campaign, before analysing the effect of variables in the following section. Subsequent to this analysis, I investigate the 'flow of the vote' for persuadable voters from their pre-campaign vote intention to their post-campaign vote choice, to understand where votes were won from and lost to.

Figure 5.9: Range of Predicted Values in Voting Conservative at the 2017 General Election

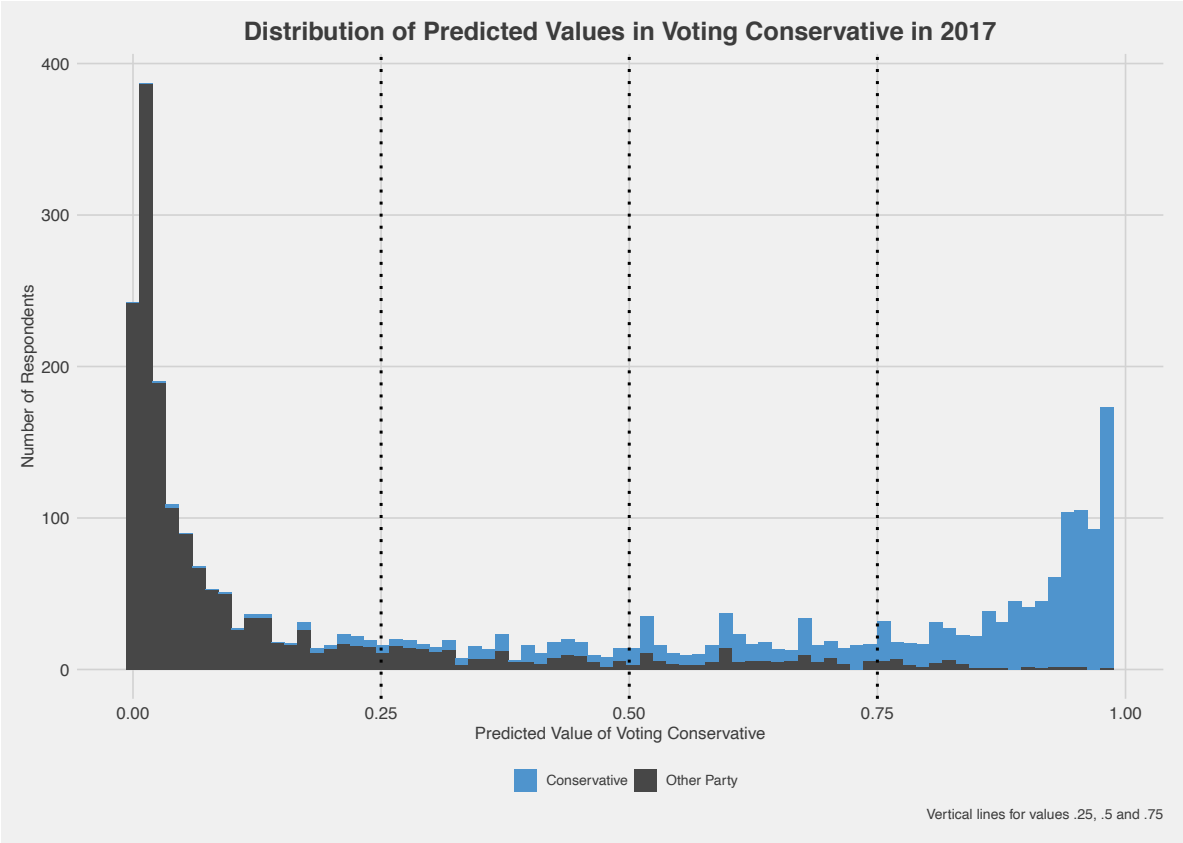
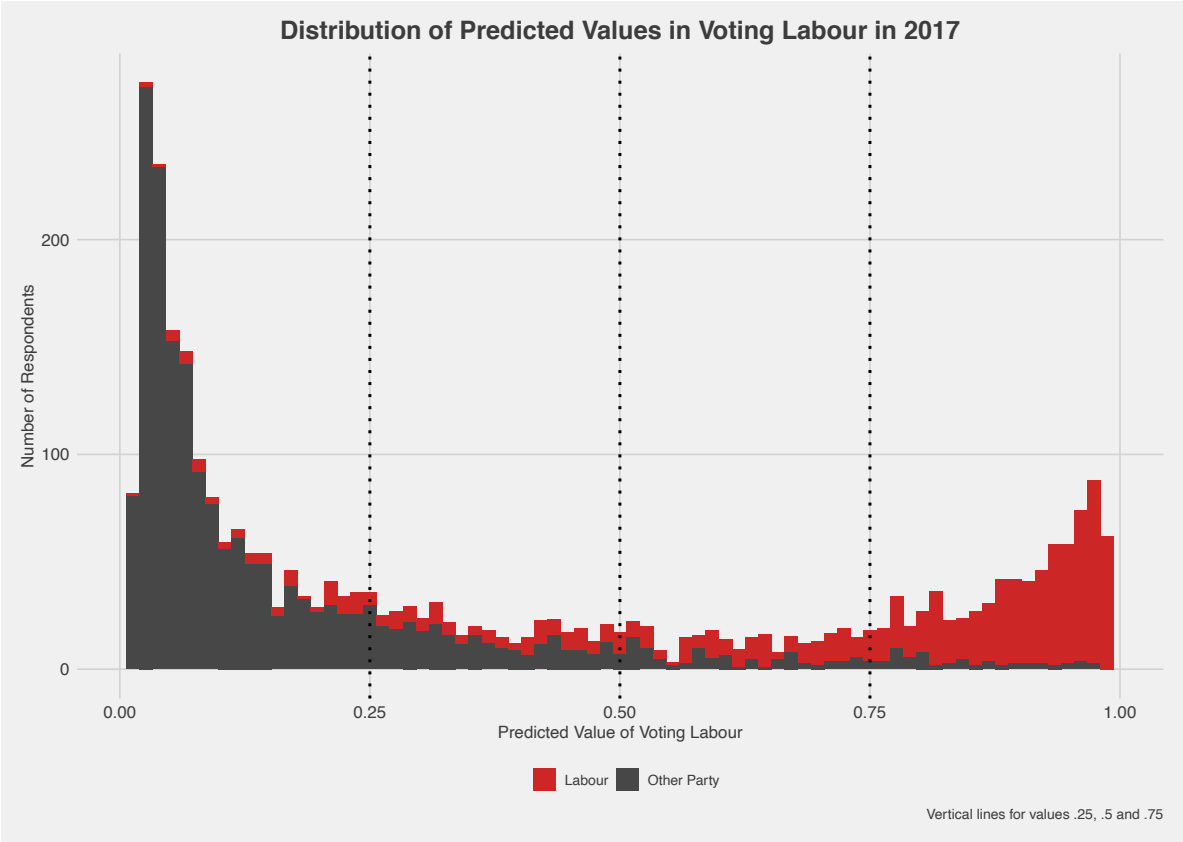


Figure 5.10: Range of Predicted Values in Voting Labour at the 2017 General Election



Figures 5.9-5.12 illustrate the distribution of predicted values for each respondent before they are turned into a binary outcome. The fill of columns indicates respondents' actual vote in the election. As 100 iterations of the analysis were run, the figures displayed are the iteration that was closest to the average. Figures 5.9 and 5.10 provide the values for predicting Labour and Conservative vote choice at the 2017 General Election. In terms of predictive accuracy, the pattern of each graph is clear. Accuracy is noticeably higher at either end of the spectrum than for voters with moderate predicted scores positioned towards the centre. For voters with predicted values greater than .75 or lower than .25, model predictions are correct in 93.5% of cases (percentage from Figure 5.10). When examining voters between .25 and .75 the model is significantly less successful as only 65.9% of predictions are correct, demonstrating that this group is more difficult to classify based on pre-campaign variables. Therefore, the centre ground of the graph is where persuadable voters are likely to be positioned. Results for the 2015 election are very similar to 2017. Again, in 2015, more extreme values are easier to predict correctly than values closer to the centre. Fewer voters overall voted for the two main parties in the 2015 general election and, as a result, fewer voters are positioned on the right side of the Figures 5.11 and 5.12.

Figure 5.11: Predicted Values of Voting Conservative at the 2015 General Election

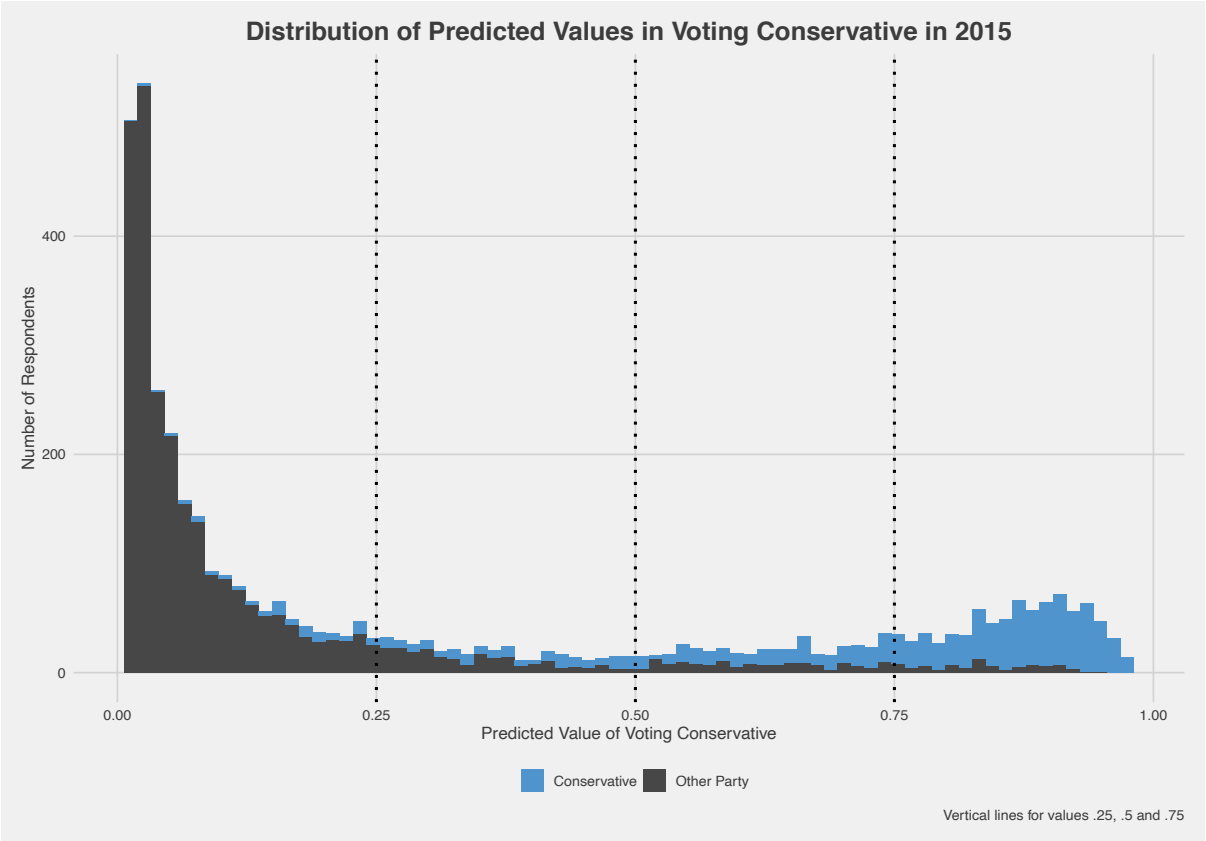
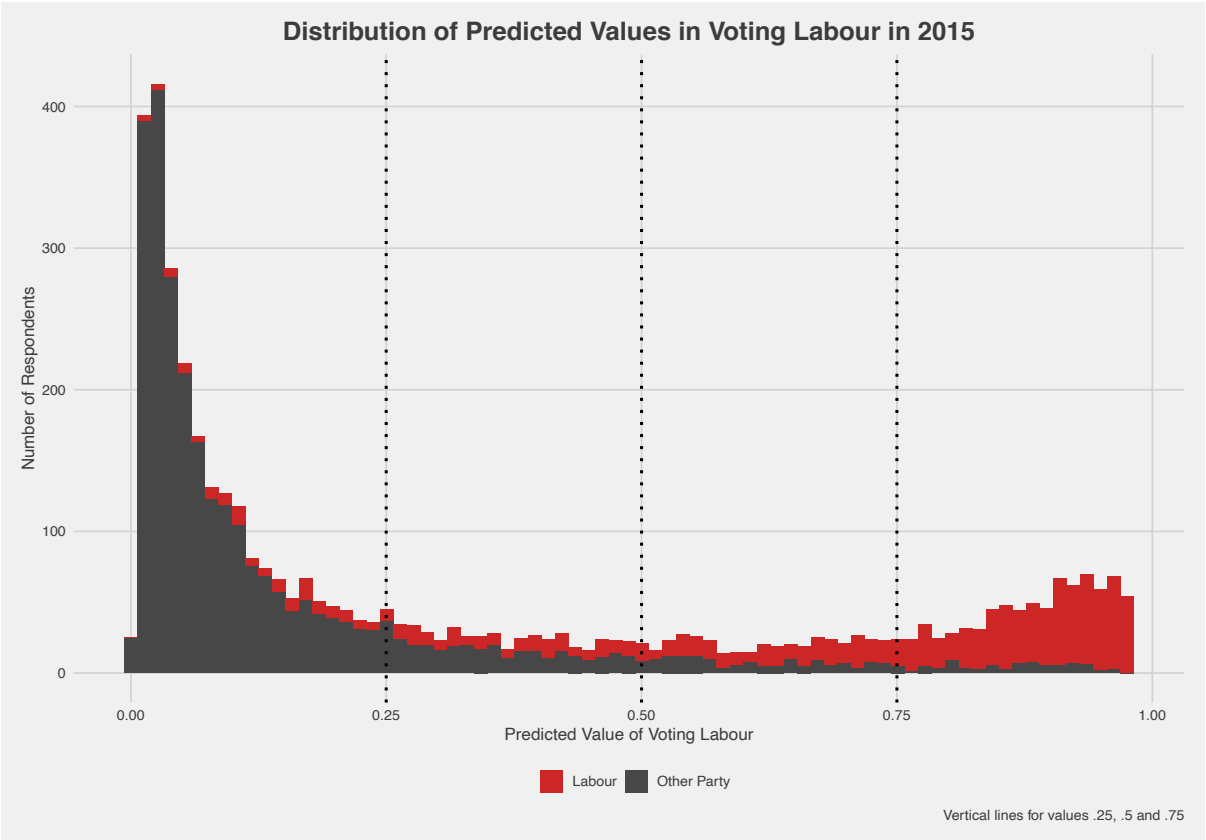


Figure 5.12: Distribution of Predicted Values in Voting Labour at the 2015 General Election



Examining Leader Effects on 'Goldilocks' Voters

I now examine individuals with a pre-campaign predicted score of between .25 and .75 in further detail to investigate the effect of changed leadership evaluations during the campaign. It is reasonable to assume that these voters could be convinced during the campaign to vote for a different political party. For this reason, I label them 'goldilocks' voters, as their predicted values are not too extreme in either direction, meaning there should be some uncertainty whether these individuals will back either the Conservatives of Labour in their respective models. This section investigates changes in attitudes during the campaign variables can explain why some goldilocks voters either vote Labour or Conservative and why the remainder of goldilocks voters do not.

I construct standard binomial regression models to explain general election vote choice in 2015 and 2017 for these specific voters. The model uses a binary vote choice variable as the dependent variable. To explain vote choice, the model uses campaign variables which measure the change in opinions or evaluations. Here the focus is on measuring the impact of change during the campaign. Variables included are: change in leadership evaluations, change in strength of partisanship, change in EU vote intention and change in perception of which party is likely to win the respondent's constituency. Pre-campaign variables of these measures are included to control prior attitudes. I decided not to expand the list of explanatory variables at risk of overfitting the model. While the number of goldilocks voters available to examine here is larger than previous studies, it is still not extensive.[12] I present summary statistics from each model. Again, as the model was run with multiple iterations, the coefficients, standard error and p-values presented are averaged.

[12] The number of 'goldilocks' voters the model is tested on varies between parties. Conservative iterations typically featured 300-450 respondents, while Labour iterations featured 600-750.

There are three substantial insights relating to goldilocks voters from the results of these models. Firstly, changing perceptions of party leaders over the course of both campaigns is highly influential in explaining who will eventually vote for the party. Secondly, there are noticeable differences between the 2015 and 2017 models, indicating that effects are inconsistent across elections. In particular, changes in partisanship are less important in 2017 than in 2015. Lastly, the remaining variables that capture campaign change have no consistent effect on voters in any model.

There are clear effects from changes in leader evaluations in explaining differences between voters who ultimately vote for either the Conservatives or Labour. However, there are differences between the strength of these effects in 2015 and 2017. Critically, in 2015, increases in the strength of partisanship over the campaign are stronger in explaining the difference in vote choice for goldilocks voters than change in leadership evaluations. For example, becoming a stronger Conservative party identifier during the election has a very strong effect on voting Conservative in 2015. The same effects can be seen in the Labour model. Voters who identified more with either of these parties during the campaign were then more likely to vote for that party in the election. Changes in leadership evaluations remain important in both 2015 models. More positive evaluations of Cameron have a strong effect on Conservative vote choice. However, there is no evidence of a negative effect from better evaluations of Miliband on voting Conservative. In the Labour model there is a positive effect from more positive evaluations of Miliband but no negative effect from more positive evaluations of Cameron.[13] The size of the effect from changes in evaluations of Miliband is noticeably smaller than the effect of Cameron in the Conservative model. There is little

[13] This effect is slightly above the .05 threshold for statistical significance.

evidence of any other variable explaining the differences between goldilocks voters, with the exception of change in respondents' assessments that Labour will win in their constituency in the Labour model. The smaller sample size after isolating this particular subset of voters could have factored into higher p-values for these effects. Voters who grew more confident that Labour would win were more likely to vote for the party. Pre-campaign variables in the Conservative model have strong and expected effects from partisanship and evaluations of Cameron. Labour partisanship, leadership evaluations, EU referendum (Leave) vote and Labour vote in the 2010 General Election all have strong effects on Labour vote choice. Changes in partisanship and leadership evaluations are statistically significant here, providing an understanding of why goldilocks voters supported either Labour or the Conservatives in the 2015 General Election.

Table 5.10: 'Goldilocks' Voters - Conservative Model 2015

	Variable	Est.	Standard Error	p-value
1	(Intercept)	**0.02**	0.23	0.41
2	Change in EU Referendum Vote	**-0.14**	0.13	0.35
3	EU Referendum Vote - Leave	**-0.33**	0.25	0.29
4	Age	**-0.01**	0.12	0.46
5	Education	**-0.02**	0.12	0.49
6	Income - Household	**0.12**	0.12	0.36
7	Gender	**0.4**	0.23	0.18
8	Ethnicity – Non-White British	**-0.17**	0.42	0.47
9	Conservative Partisanship	**0.86**	0.14	0
10	Change in Conservative Partisanship	**0.75**	0.14	0
11	Cameron Evaluation	**0.76**	0.16	0
12	Miliband Evaluation	**-0.31**	0.13	0.08
13	Change in Cameron Evaluation	**0.53**	0.14	0.01
14	Change in Miliband Evaluation	**-0.21**	0.12	0.19
15	Respondent's Assessment Conservatives Will Win Constituency	**0.3**	0.13	0.08
16	Change in Respondent's Assessment Conservatives Will Win Constituency	**0.16**	0.12	0.3
17	2010 GE Vote - Conservative	**0.44**	0.24	0.14

Table 5.11: 'Goldilocks' Voters - Labour Model 2015

	Variable	Est.	Standard Error	p-value
1	(Intercept)	**-0.05**	0.19	0.44
2	Change in EU Referendum Vote	**-0.01**	0.11	0.42
3	EU Referendum Vote - Leave	**-0.68**	0.25	0.05
4	Age	**0.02**	0.11	0.47
5	Education	**0.07**	0.12	0.44
6	Income - Household	**0.07**	0.12	0.45
7	Gender	**0.36**	0.21	0.19
8	Ethnicity – Non-White British	**0.19**	0.35	0.5
9	Labour Partisanship	**1.06**	0.14	0
10	Change in Labour Partisanship	**0.83**	0.12	0
11	Cameron Evaluation	**-0.47**	0.12	0.01
12	Miliband Evaluation	**0.7**	0.13	0
13	Change in Cameron Evaluation	**-0.25**	0.11	0.12
14	Change in Miliband Evaluation	**0.38**	0.12	0.06
15	Respondent's Assessment Labour Will Win Constituency	**0.51**	0.12	0
16	Change in Respondent's Assessment Labour Will Win Constituency	**0.32**	0.11	0.04
17	2010 GE Vote - Labour	**0.5**	0.22	0.11

Results from the 2017 model show stronger effects from changed evaluations of party leaders in explaining the vote choice of goldilocks voters. Changing leadership evaluations of May and Corbyn in 2017 had a clear effect on whether voters decided to vote Conservative or Labour. Positive changes in evaluations of May had a strong effect on voting Conservative. However, her personal ratings declined during the campaign, likely costing the Conservatives support from goldilocks voters. Similarly, increasingly negative opinions of Corbyn during the campaign indicates respondents were more likely to vote Conservative. While more positive changes in evaluations of Corbyn led to greater support for Labour, there is no significant

effect from changing evaluations of May. Whilst the effect of party leaders is stronger in 2017, the effect of changing partisanship is weaker. Change in partisanship is not statistically significant in either the Labour or Conservative models, representing a distinct difference from the 2015 results. Pre-campaign variables of partisanship, leadership evaluations and previous general election vote all have powerful effects on vote choice in both models. Evidence from both 2017 models suggests that goldilocks voters' party choice was more likely due to changes in evaluations of leaders, rather than changes in partisanship.

Stronger leaders' effects in 2017 were found during a campaign where evaluations of the leaders evaluations of the two main parties changed rapidly, and in opposite directions for rival leaders, over the course of a few weeks. While voters reacted to the unfolding events of the campaign in 2017, and adjusted their evaluations of leaders as a result, changes in party identification did not explain vote choice. But if, as was the case in 2015, changes in leader evaluations are moderate and do not represent a reversal in fortunes from the pre-campaign environment, leader effects may be smaller. Effects from leaders are still visible in 2015, suggesting they continued to be impactful on goldilocks voters, but they did not feature a relative effect from changing evaluations of the rival leader. While all modern campaigns focus somewhat on party leaders, the unexpected reversal of fortunes for the leaders in 2017 may have contributed to a larger effect in this election.

Table 5.12: 'Goldilocks' Voters - Conservative Model 2017

	Variable	Est	Standard Error	p-value
1	(Intercept)	**-1.02**	0.41	0.05
2	Change in EU Referendum Vote	**0.04**	0.94	0.47
3	EU Referendum Vote - Leave	**1.21**	0.38	0.01
4	Age	**-0.1**	0.13	0.43
5	Education	**-0.05**	0.14	0.46
6	Income - Household	**-0.04**	0.14	0.54
7	Gender	**-0.12**	0.25	0.42
8	Ethnicity – Not 'White British'	**0.9**	0.55	0.21
9	Conservative Partisanship	**0.73**	0.17	0
10	Change in Conservative Partisanship	**0.32**	0.14	0.11
11	Corbyn Evaluation	**-0.68**	0.15	0
12	May Evaluation	**1.06**	0.17	0
13	Change in Corbyn Evaluation	**-0.47**	0.14	0.02
14	Change in May Evaluation	**0.72**	0.15	0
15	Respondent's Assessment Conservatives Will Win Constituency	**0.18**	0.15	0.33
16	Change in Respondent's Assessment Conservatives Will Win Constituency	**0.16**	0.14	0.33
17	2015 GE Vote - Conservative	**1.33**	0.41	0.02

Table 5.13: 'Goldilocks' Voters - Labour Model 2017

	Variable	Est	Standard Error	p-value
1	(Intercept)	**-0.53**	0.23	0.1
2	Change in EU Referendum Vote	**0.08**	0.11	0.37
3	EU Referendum Vote - Leave	**-0.12**	0.29	0.48
4	Age	**-0.2**	0.12	0.2
5	Education	**-0.08**	0.13	0.52
6	Income - Household	**0.05**	0.12	0.5
7	Gender	**-0.01**	0.23	0.52
8	Ethnicity – Not 'White British'	**0.13**	0.43	0.44
9	Labour Partisanship	**0.93**	0.16	0
10	Change in Labour Partisanship	**0.2**	0.13	0.21
11	Corbyn Evaluation	**0.97**	0.18	0
12	May Evaluation	**-0.63**	0.16	0
13	Change in Corbyn Evaluation	**0.48**	0.13	0.01
14	Change in May Evaluation	**-0.33**	0.12	0.03
15	Respondent's Assessment Labour Will Win Constituency	**0.47**	0.14	0.01
16	Change in Respondent's Assessment Labour Will Win Constituency	**0.08**	0.13	0.46
17	2015 GE Vote - Labour	**1.61**	0.33	0

One further consideration is whether the persuadable Conservative and Labour goldilocks voters are in fact the same respondents. The expectation would be that goldilocks voters are specific to each party because they are identified by their pre-campaign attitudes. I identify the number of respondents, based on their predicted scores, classified as both a Labour and Conservative goldilocks voter. Once again, the cross-validation approach with 100 iterations facilitates the calculation of a reliable figure. Results from 2017 show that only a minority of individuals are found in both the Conservative and Labour goldilocks voter groups, with most respondents falling exclusively in one group. Results indicate that 26% of Labour goldilocks voters were also found to be in the Conservative goldilocks range. Figures for the Conservative goldilocks voters are slightly higher with 30.8% of these voters also found in the

Labour goldilocks range. There are noticeably lower levels of overlap in 2015, with 9.3% of Labour goldilocks voters overlapping with Conservatives, while only 12.4% of Conservative goldilocks voters overlap with their Labour counterparts. Therefore, the results show there is limited overlap between Conservative and Labour goldilocks voters.

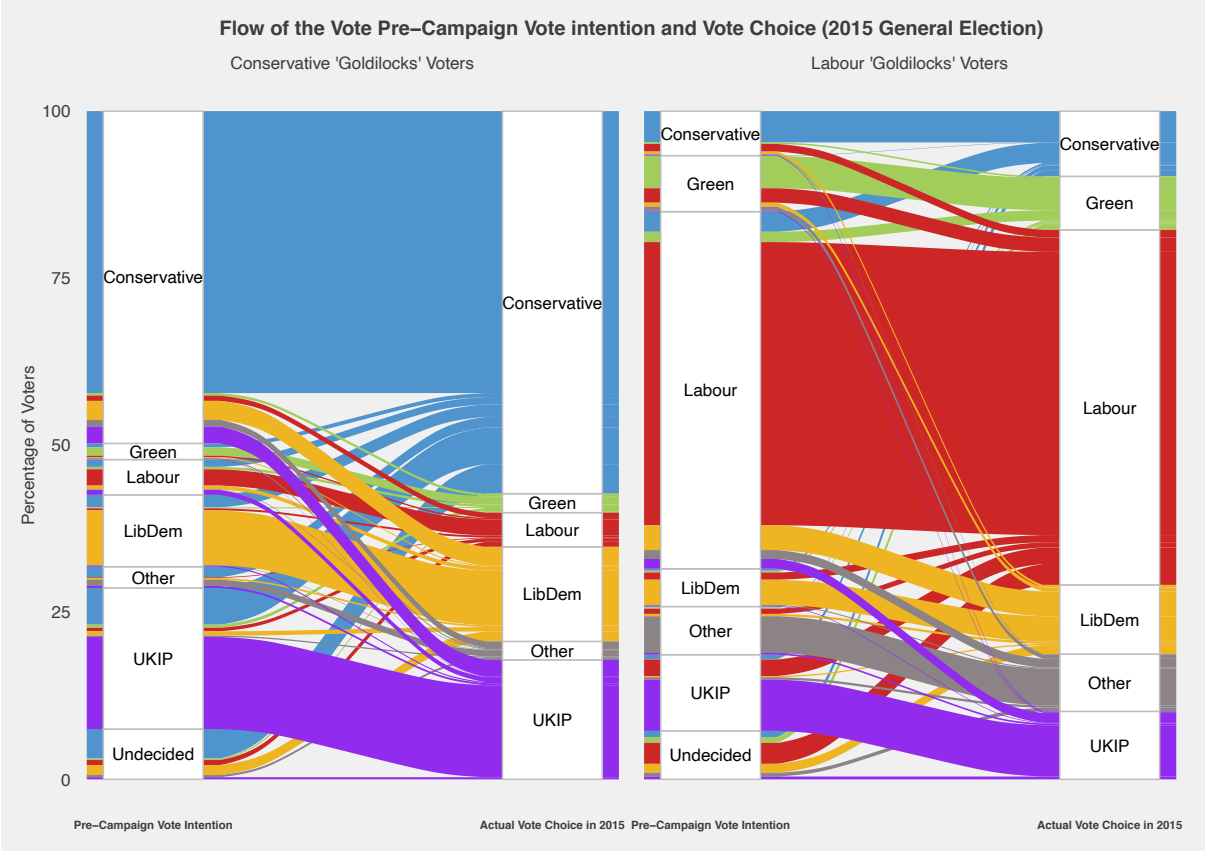
General Election Vote Choice

It is worthwhile exploring which party goldilocks voters eventually voted for in the general election and who they intended to vote for before the campaign began. This provides further insights into where voters came from and were lost to. In 2015, the Conservatives picked up a notable share of goldilocks voters, in contrast to Labour who struggled with this key group of voters. In 2017, the Conservatives still attracted some goldilocks voters, but Labour gained a substantial amount of these voters during the campaign, albeit from a poor position at the beginning of the campaign.

In the 2015 election, Figure 5.13 shows that the Conservatives effectively picked up goldilocks votes from other parties, while predominantly maintaining the vote it already had. Mostly, the Conservatives gained from voters who were undecided or intending to vote UKIP. Just under half (49.7%) of goldilocks voters intended to vote Conservative before the campaign had started, increasing to 57.2% voting Conservative on polling day. Figure 5.13 shows how the Conservatives lost some goldilocks voters to other parties but nevertheless finished with a net 7.5 percentage point increase. This trend suggests that the Conservatives were effective during the campaign in convincing voters who were undecided about its positions and policies. In contrast, Labour stagnated with a 0.3 percentage point decrease, as Labour began with 53.4% of goldilocks voters and finished with 53.1%. Labour gained mostly from undecided voters, but also small sections of voters who intended to vote Green, UKIP

and Liberal Democrat at the beginning of the campaign. However, Labour's gains were cancelled out as it lost support to the Liberal Democrats, Conservatives and Greens during the campaign. Labour's campaign was unsuccessful in convincing enough floating voters in the same proportion as the Conservatives.

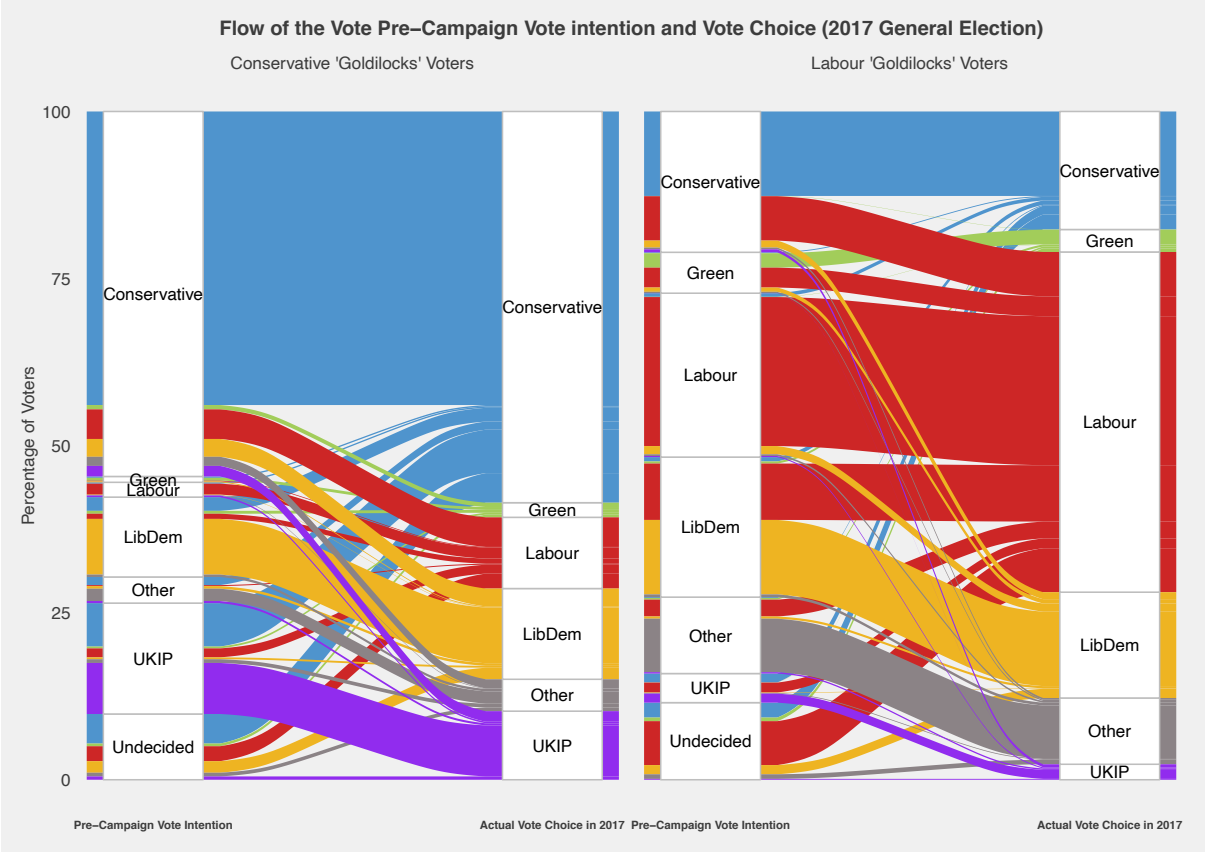
Figure 5.13: Flow of the 'Goldilocks' Vote (2015), Pre-Campaign Vote Intention to Actual General Election Vote Choice



As with the earlier analysis conducted in this chapter, Labour in the 2017 election represents a noticeable deviation from the pattern established in 2015. Figure 5.14 presents a compelling overview of the movement toward Labour in 2017 among goldilocks voters. At the beginning of the campaign only 24.5% of Labour goldilocks voters intended to vote Labour at the upcoming general election, with 21.2% intending to vote Liberal Democrat, 18.7% Conservative and a further 13.6% undecided. Labour were failing to win over many of the voters who the model suggested were potential, but uncertain, backers of the party. By the

end of the campaign 50.9% of goldilocks voters opted for Labour in the 2017 election, more than double the proportion of voters who indicated they would vote for the party before the campaign. Labour primarily gained from voters who were undecided or intended to vote Conservative or Liberal Democrat at the beginning of the campaign. The change in vote choices from these voters is stark and no doubt contributed to Labour's electoral performance in 2017. It demonstrates the success of Labour's 2017 campaign. However, it is important to be clear about what 'success' meant for Labour in 2017. The party made up substantial ground among goldilocks voters, largely undoing the damage of entering the campaign on such a poor standing, but ultimately not taking the party beyond the percentage of goldilocks voters gained in 2015. In most regards, the flow of the Conservative vote in the 2017 election is familiar to 2015 but differs in some key respects. It is similar because the Conservatives still gained amongst these voters, with a net increase of 3.8% over the campaign. This remains a significant increase. In the context of a poor campaign, voters were gained from familiar sources of undecided and UKIP voters. A noticeable difference is the growth in Labour voters amongst Conservative goldilocks voters. The Conservative party gained some goldilocks voters, but Labour did disproportionately better in gaining these voters during the campaign.

Figure 5.14: Flow of the 'Goldilocks' Vote (2017), Pre-Campaign Vote Intention to Actual General Election Vote Choice



Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the importance of party leader evaluations in predicting voter behaviour at the 2015 and 2017 elections. The movements in leadership ratings during the campaign in these elections were highly distinctive, leading to an expectation that campaign effects would be stronger in 2017. I detailed how the majority of voters' party choices could be predicted from attitudes and responses measured before the campaign had begun. Results illustrate that campaigns are unlikely to change the long-held political views of most voters. This includes voters' evaluations of party leaders. Using a combination of pre-campaign vote intention, predicted vote choice and actual vote choice provided, an estimation of the size of three different campaign effects: reinforcement, activation and conversion. While the largest effect for each party was reinforcement, results demonstrated

this effect was less prominent for Labour in 2017, while activation and conversion effects were more important.

To provide greater clarity on why voters convert, or are activated during the campaign, I identified a subsection of the electorate that were more likely to be persuaded by the election campaign using models that captured pre-campaign attitudes. This was an important step of the analysis because most studies argue that only certain voters are likely to be impacted by the campaign and little detail is provided about what causes these voters to switch. Goldilocks voters are realistic targets for political parties to win over during the campaign. Results found here illustrate that changing evaluations of party leaders were crucial to understanding the vote choice of this sub-group in 2015 and 2017. These results have significant implications for leader effects because they demonstrate a clear link between changed evaluations during the campaign and vote choice. Changing levels of partisanship had a strong effect on these voters in 2015, but were absent from the 2017 models, with changes in leadership evaluations the only statistically significant effect in 2017. Stronger leadership effects illustrate the significance of leadership performance during election campaigns as a method to convince persuadable voters. Parties can gain a large proportion of voters based on the performance of their leaders during the campaign. Better evaluations of leaders can be effective for parties either lagging behind in opinion polls going into the campaign or looking to maintain their lead. Pre-campaign leader evaluations were also central to improving the accuracy of vote choice predictions. Party leader evaluations were crucial to understanding the effects of the 2015 and 2017 election campaigns.

The chapter presents a series of wider findings in explaining the outcomes of the 2015 and 2017 elections. It details how Labour lost support among core partisans in 2015, losing 10% of Labour identifiers over the campaign. Labour also failed to convince goldilocks voters

during the 2015 campaign, actually losing a small number of these crucial voters over the campaign, in comparison to the Conservatives adding a significant amount. While the Conservatives and Labour had similar levels of popularity going into the campaign, these gains were likely to be impactful on the Conservative victory. In the case of 2017, the campaign fundamentally changed the overall outcome. Corbyn's rating increased across the entire sample of voters, particularly amongst Labour Party identifiers, bringing back natural Labour supporters into the fold was crucial to the votes gained in 2017. Similarly, the Conservative's struggle during the 2017 campaign, as demonstrated through the party largely defending the base voter base it had already accumulated but failing to add to it.

Studies that analyse campaign effects are often focused on understanding how many voters changed their minds during the election and whether this affected the outcome of the election. These studies may find that the campaign had little effect on most voters and too readily conclude that campaigns are unlikely to change the overall outcome of elections. When examining conversion effects, it is crucial to provide a baseline of how likely voters are to switch before investigating the reasons behind the switching. Isolating these voters first, based on their pre-campaign attitudes, before analysing the reasons behind switching enables a more convincing analysis of the vote choices made by this crucial section of the electorate. This goes beyond analysing the size of different effects and elections and provides a greater insight on 'floating' voters.

Chapter 6 : From Footnotes to Headliners: UK Party Leaders on Election Night

The outcome of UK general elections unfolds in the late hours of polling day and the early hours of the following day. Election night television broadcasts, which follow and analyse the declared results, offer the first opportunity to analyse the results after weeks of speculation about the outcome. How influential are party leaders understood to be within these immediate narratives explaining the election outcome? Previous discussion in the literature review chapter highlighted how party leaders have become the dominant focus of media coverage during general election campaigns (Deacon et al. 2017; Hayes 2009; Mughan and Aaldering 2018). The activities of party leaders are followed closely throughout the campaign, and once the election outcome begins to unfold, commentators can retrospectively examine the effect of campaign activities. In the light of election results, do individuals change their assessment of the qualities and performance of leaders (see Ross & Joslyn 1988). The intense focus on party leaders during the campaign, combined with supporting academic evidence that leaders have an influential impact on vote choice (Barisione 2009; Bittner 2011; Mughan 2015), leads to the expectation that leaders will be key figures of discussion on election night. The first analysis of party leaders' impact on the election results occurs during this ritual programming.

The importance of narratives constructed on election night lies in the way they are used to frame election victories and failures for parties and their leaders. With the purpose of advancing the scope of previous studies, which have been confined to examining one or two elections (Cathcart 1997; Lauerbach 2013; Marriott 2000; Schieß 2007), this chapter illustrates the potential of findings in analysing election night trends over a long time period. The construction of a multi-election data set enables an examination of general trends over

time, whilst maintaining the detail relating to specific elections. Of course, after polling stations have closed, leaders can no longer have an effect on the outcome, but their specific role in influencing public understanding of the outcome deserves closer attention. Detailed quantitative analysis, such as in the previous chapter, is not readily available to help commentators explain the election results. Constructing statistical models about voter behaviour occurs in the months that follow the election, but explanations of election outcomes begin during televised results programmes. Immediate assessments of party leaders' performance and abilities are likely to be discussed during election night broadcasts. Therefore, which leadership qualities are identified during the broadcast as responsible for persuading voters to choose the leader's party? Poor election results often impact directly upon whether incumbents can continue to lead political parties (Curtice and Blais 2001; So 2018). It prompts questions about how responsible leaders are for their party's performance and whether they can continue as leader. This chapter constitutes an ambitious study into the effects prescribed to party leaders in order to understand election results.

I begin by providing an overview of election night broadcasts where they relate to party leaders, detailing how attention to party leaders has steadily increased over the time series. Leaders are frequently mentioned in post-1979 broadcasts and become a common subject of discussion. I advance the argument that this is likely to be linked to broadcasters producing election outcome forecasts from exit polls. In recent election broadcasts, party leaders are immediately presented to viewers as key players. Next, I present four themes where discussion of party leaders is prominent. First, I demonstrate that talk of potential resignations from leaders has become a common feature of modern broadcasts. Broadcast journalists become particularly focused on whether leaders will have to resign on the basis of the election result and who may replace defeated leaders. Second, the performance of party

leaders during election campaigns is perceived by broadcasts to be highly important. Chapter Five outlined that the effect of changes in evaluations of party leaders was inconsistent between elections. However, discussion during broadcasts the campaign performance of leaders is considered to be particularly significant to the election result. Third, I present the range of leadership characteristics identified within the broadcasts that are considered to have contributed to the election outcome. Earlier analyses, in Chapters Four and Chapter Five, were constrained to analysing general like-dislike summaries; here I analyse both competency and personality traits. Finally, I explain where leaders are blamed or praised for good or bad election outcomes. Blame for party leaders is dependent upon the perceived closeness of the result and whether leaders have produced surprising results but, it is increasingly common for the victor to receive praise from their party colleagues interviewed during the broadcast.

Leaders and the Explanation of Election Results

The purpose of election night broadcasts are to describe and interpret the election results to viewers, as votes are counted and constituency results announced (Lauerbach 2013; Orr 2015; Ross and Joslyn 1988). Presentation of the results themselves, and in later broadcasts of exit poll predictions, provide answers to the fundamental question of election night, 'which party won?' (Orr 2015). Results or exit polls by themselves, however, are unable to explain why voters produced the reported outcome. During broadcasts, a variety of personnel including broadcast journalists, politicians, academics, political correspondents and occasionally members of the public, offer their own thoughts in explaining the outcome. Crucially, explanations of election outcomes are sought before any detailed or statistical analysis can be undertaken. Participants on election night must respond to the results in real time creating a unique scenario where explanations of the outcome are developed

throughout the night. Specifically, politicians must assess the performance of their party and evaluate the contribution of their leader while results are still being declared (Lauerbach 2007; Marriott 2000). Narratives constructed following election night coverage can frame subsequent understandings of the election and alter the immediate priorities of governments (Cathcart 1997; Hale 1993; Mendelsohn 1998). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated party leader effects on voter behaviour (Barisione 2009; Bittner 2011; Mughan 2015). Investigating how party leaders are used to develop the understanding of the outcome of elections warrants additional examination.

Forecasts in the form of exit polls or proto-exit polls have commanded the majority of scholarly attention of election night coverage (Brown, Firth, and Payne 1999; Brown and Payne 1984, 1975; Curtice et al. 2017; Curtice, Fisher, and Kuha 2011; Fisher, Kuha, and Payne 2010). However, analysis of the effect the exit poll has on broader election coverage is rare (Brown, Firth, and Payne 1999; Butler and Kavanagh 1992). Exit poll forecasts are commissioned by British broadcasters to shape the initial discussion of the election, filling time in the broadcast between the polls closing and the first results. The development and proliferation of exit polls occurs during the time period covered in this chapter and has potential implications for the findings.

A wealth of research has investigated the characteristics and traits considered important to voters (Bean and Mughan 1989; Bittner 2011; Clarke et al. 2004, 2009a; Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2015). Importantly, distinctions are often made between leaders' competency and personality traits. References to specific leadership qualities may offer an insight into which qualities are considered most important to influence voters. The salience of individual traits can range between elections, through analysing traits over a range of elections, I examine whether specific traits are highlighted in individual elections (Evans and

Andersen 2005; Stevens and Karp 2012). Examination of leadership traits during election night has been explored to some extent in the US academic literature. For example, Ross and Joslyn (1988) describe how Walter Mondale's personal qualities were criticised during the campaign but, on election night, he was praised as dignified and honourable because commentators had concluded no candidate could stop Ronald Reagan's landslide in 1984. Additionally, as election night broadcasts are the culmination of election campaigns, coverage may place a strong emphasis in the preceding campaign. With leaders placed at the centre of the campaign, their performance is likely to receive particular scrutiny (Bean and Mughan 1989; Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013). This scrutiny is likely to have increased in elections since 2010, as campaigns have become more focussed around televised debates between party leaders (Deacon et al. 2017; Gaber 2013; Harrison 1992; Mellon 2016).

Once election data becomes available and can be subsequently analysed by researchers, more detailed and reliable reasons for the election outcome and voter behaviour are established. The effect of party leaders on the election outcome is commonly assessed during these studies. For instance, whether John Major was a vote winner for the Conservatives in 1992, or whether Theresa May was a vote loser for the Conservatives in 2017, the effect of leaders is often considered in post-election analyses by scholars (Bale and Webb 2018; Clarke, Ho, and Stewart 2000; Heath and Goodwin 2017; Sanders 1992). With detailed analysis unavailable during election night coverage, responsibility for the outcome may be attributed to leaders, but with little evidence to support these claims. Leaders are likely to be at the forefront of this discussion if their party's campaign strategy has been structured around their characteristics and personality (Cowley and Kavanagh 2018; Seawright 2013). Therefore, attributing the outcome of elections to leaders during election broadcasts would highlight their perceived importance from broadcasters and politicians.

After considering the contributions made by these and previous studies, the following hypotheses were presented in the methodology chapter of this thesis and the hypotheses relevant to this chapter are restated in Box 6.1.

Box 6.1: Hypotheses and sub-hypotheses for party leaders and election night broadcasts

Discussion and focus of party leaders increase over time.

Party leaders are central to the immediate understandings presented by broadcasters in explaining results.

Greater focus is given to leadership succession, performance and characteristics of leaders during modern coverage.

Modern election night broadcasts examine the performance and characteristics of leaders during the preceding campaign.

Actions of leaders are blamed and praised by participants when explaining the outcome of elections.

Data Analysis & Approach

The results in this chapter are presented using a variety of graphs, tables and excerpts taken from transcripts. These combine to provide an overview of trends across the elections that is supported by visualisations and detailed text. The first hour of each transcript is a verbatim copy of the broadcast, enabling quantitative analysis of the data and comparison across the seventeen elections in the dataset. Quotes are taken directly from transcripts of BBC coverage and I identify the election that the excerpt is taken from. In order to preserve the level of detail in the transcripts, text was coded simultaneously, meaning that several codes could apply to one section of text within the range of codes that were developed (Saldana 2012). By coding the text using this method, maximum information could be retained whilst preserving the richness of the dataset (Bryman 2016). After coding each of the seventeen transcripts, themes were developed in relation to the hypotheses outlined, to provide a detailed understanding of the data and generate a structured presentation for the findings.

There were challenges in gathering and processing the substantial amount of text from these transcripts. The process of cleaning and managing the data was outlined in Chapter Three. It is important to outline that the analysis in this chapter focuses strictly on the audio section of broadcasts. Other researchers have chosen to focus on the visual aspect of election coverage (Marriott 2000; Schieß 2007) but the focus here is on the spoken discussion about party leaders. There is of course some overlap between the two mediums, as televised pictures or graphics can be the focus of conversation or require lengthy explanations from broadcast journalists or academics. My decision to focus on spoken discussion allows for a thorough examination of how much attention is given to party leaders in the broadcast, the context in which they are discussed and how they are understood to have contributed to the election outcome.

From Footnotes to Headliners: Tracking the coverage and interest in party Leaders from 1955-2017

This section details the substantial rise in discussion, comments and questions relating to leaders of political parties in BBC election night broadcasts from 1955 to 2017. It explains how modern election broadcasts dedicate a growing proportion of coverage to party leaders and have become 'headliners' in modern election coverage. Despite leaders participating in some early broadcasts, the focus shifts disproportionally to leaders in later broadcasts.

Table 6.1 displays the length of time between the first spoken word in each broadcast and the first explicit mention of a party leader. With the exception of 1970, no leader is mentioned in the opening ten minutes of a broadcast from 1955 to February 1974. Results for the 1950s show an even greater difference, with leaders not mentioned in the first 20 minutes. There is then an abrupt shift, first seen in 1970, but continuously from October 1974, with leaders consistently mentioned within the first five minutes of the broadcast. At this

stage, leaders are now being billed as major figures at the top of the broadcast. In five of the six most recent elections analysed, leaders are name-checked within the first minute of coverage, with the quickest time recorded in 2010, just 16 seconds into the broadcast. In these elections, leaders play an important part in framing the broadcast before the BBC releases its exit poll figures. For instance, in 2010, when a hung parliament was widely expected, the leaders were introduced in relation to their possible role in this situation. As a result, David Cameron, Gordon Brown and Nick Clegg are each mentioned individually at the beginning of the programme. Moments into the 2015 broadcast, the narrative for the election was also set in relation to the party leaders:

> *David Dimbleby: "All the results will come in here to be analysed, and they will reveal whether David Cameron will return triumphant, or [will] Ed Miliband succeed in driving him from Number Ten".*
> – 2015 BBC Election Night Broadcast

Speculation about which leader will reside in number 10 is at the forefront of David Dimbleby's introduction to the program even before the exit poll results are revealed. These introductory remarks demonstrate the importance that broadcasters give to leaders, as a narrative for the programme, and the election outcome is framed around which leader will occupy No. 10 Downing Street rather than which party will form the next government. Similar framing takes place in the 2010 and 2017 elections. Introductory remarks for the 2010, 2015 and 2017 BBC election night broadcasts introduce leaders as the main characters in the drama of election night. This framing stands in stark contrast to the 1955 programme where party leaders are not mentioned or referenced once by Richard Dimbleby as he explains the format of the broadcast and the important events of the night. The overall trend from Table 6.1 is clear, leaders are increasingly pushed to the forefront of election night coverage.

Table 6.1: Time Between Election Broadcast Starting and the First Mention of a Party Leader

Election	Elapsed Time of First Mention
1955	25 minutes, 17 seconds
1959	21 minutes, 37 seconds
1964	18 minutes, 36 seconds
1966	18 minutes, 2 seconds
1970	1 minute, 3 seconds
1974 February	11 minutes, 5 seconds
1974 October	2 minutes, 19 seconds
1979	4 minutes, 8 seconds
1983	1 minutes, 48 seconds
1987	1 minutes, 16 seconds
1992	1 minute, 40 seconds
1997	23 seconds
2001	56 seconds
2005	2 minutes, 24 seconds
2010	16 seconds
2015	26 seconds
2017	24 seconds

Figure 6.1 presents the percentage of coverage that relates to party leaders within the first hour of broadcasts. It shows how coverage relating to leaders, apart from a couple of exceptions, steadily increased from 1955-2001. The coverage of leaders then dropped by over ten percentage points after 2001 but remained steady between 2005-2017. The period from 1970-1987 is distinctively different to the earliest broadcasts in the 1950s and 1960s and reflects a notable change in the first hour of election broadcasts. The 1970 General Election represents the first election where the broadcast incorporates some kind of forecasting in the coverage in the form of the 'Gravesend' exit poll. With each subsequent broadcast the sophistication of the exit poll increases, generating increased discussion of its findings, with the focus on leaders increasing also. The 2001 election broadcast represents the peak of coverage relating to party leaders, as over a quarter of spoken discussion in the opening hour relates to party leaders. This high point of leaders in 2001 was likely intensified by contextual factors surrounding Labour's 'silent landslide'. With the exit poll confirming prior expectations

of an easy Labour victory, substantial coverage was therefore devoted to the consequences the result would have for William Hague as Conservative leader.

Figure 6.1: Percentage of Spoken Words of Overall Coverage about Party Leaders (First Hour of Coverage)

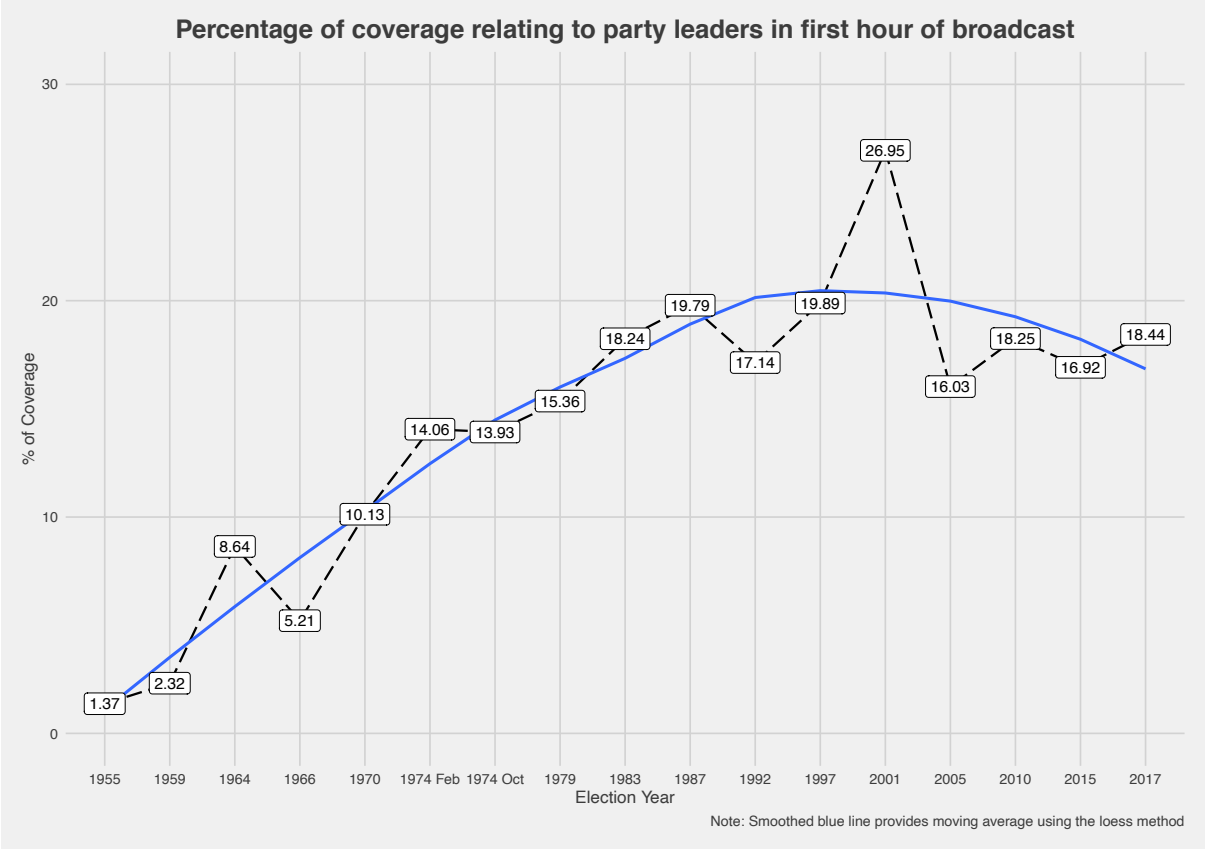
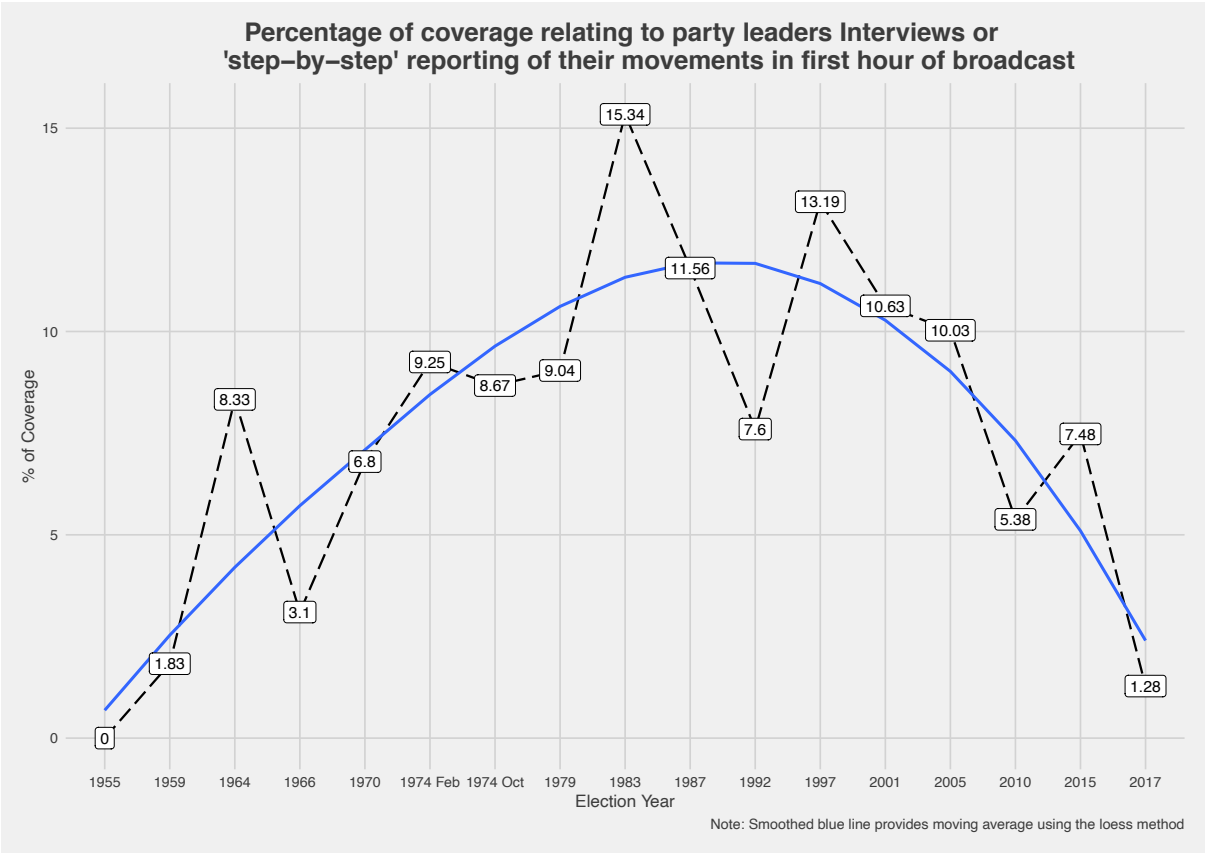


Figure 6.2 provides greater detail relating to the trend discussed above, presenting the percentage of coverage that is either dedicated to direct interviews with the party leaders or to 'step-by-step' reporting of leaders' whereabouts during the first hour of broadcast. In pre-1979 election broadcasts, party leaders often dutifully participated in, sometimes lengthy, television interviews during the first hour of the broadcast. At least one leader is directly interviewed in nine of the seventeen broadcasts in the data set, but no leader has been interviewed in the first hour of the broadcast since 2001.[14] This development is one of the contributing factors in the decline seen in the graph for the most recent elections. Some

[14] Note that this only includes leaders of the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

interviews were pre-recorded prior to the broadcasts, so leaders are not necessarily reacting to early projections and are instead making more general comments about the campaign and their expectations of the result. The interviews vary in form and quality, some are pre-arranged and lengthy, whilst others are hastily conducted as leaders travel to the count in their constituency.

Figure 6.2: Percentage of Spoken Words Relating to Party Leader Interviews or Describing the Whereabouts of Leaders (First Hour of Coverage)



Of course, interviews with party leaders can occur later in the broadcast and these are often more detailed as leaders have had the opportunity to reflect on the results. This is best exemplified by Harold Macmillan and Hugh Gaitskell having a lengthy discussion of the 1959 outcome toward the end of the broadcast. Direct interviews with Conservative and Labour leaders during election broadcasts were a regular feature in BBC election night coverage from 1959-87 (with the exception of 1979). Such interviews provided a personal insight and gave

broadcasters an opportunity to question leaders about their performance in relation to the unfolding election outcome. Moreover, broadcasters have the opportunity to ask directly about the role the leader played in the campaign and the impact this may have had on voter behaviour. This is illustrated by the following exchange between Edward Heath and a reporter on the night of the 1966 General Election.

> *Reporter: "Mr Heath you took the major burden of the actual campaigning, particularly the television campaigning at your own hands. Do you feel that you were perhaps mistaken to do this?"*
>
> *Edward Heath: "No, I don't think so, I have no regrets about the campaign at all but of course my colleagues were also playing (an) enormous part in the country. I think the way in which the campaign was covered on television and in the press made it appear that the emphasis was perhaps on the leaders of the parties…"*
> – 1966 BBC Election Night Transcript

The excerpt from this interview demonstrates the direct interaction of party leaders during earlier broadcasts, providing the reporter with an opportunity to question Heath on his role in the Conservative campaign and the perceived negative effect this had on Conservative fortunes. Heath was interviewed at a point when it was clear Labour was on track to achieve a healthy parliamentary majority. Interviews during the election broadcast hold potential risks for leaders, who may make premature and inaccurate comments about the results, particularly in elections where the result is close. Perhaps for this reason, Labour and Conservative leaders no longer participated in election night interviews from 1992 onwards.[15] Liberal Democrat leaders continued to participate in interviews on election night for longer with Paddy Ashdown, in particular, choosing to speak to the media up to the 1997 broadcast. While commentary, questions and discussion about party leaders have all increased, leaders no longer play an active role in contemporary broadcasts but continue to

[15] A camera is positioned inside the building where Kinnock is watching the election coverage, in anticipation of some reaction to the exit poll, but he does not make a comment once the exit poll results are released.

be a central focus of election night. However, leaders' speeches at their constituency continue to be closely covered in broadcasts, with leaders aware of the attention their broadcast attracts and deliver speeches aimed at the nation as a whole.

In addition to interviews with leaders, broadcasts often present 'step-by-step' coverage of leaders, detailing their movements throughout polling day, what time they will attend their constituency count, and 'gauging the mood' from their inner circle. While leaders' movements are a key focus for broadcasters, the journalists positioned to track the movements add little to the meaning or political consequences of the election outcome. For instance, BBC reporter Brian Hanrahan stationed at Michael Foot's constituency talked through his schedule for the following hours:

> *Brian Hanrahan (Blaenau Gwent) : "He's spending the evening at his agent's cottage which isn't terribly far from here. His own cottage which you saw him leaving a few minutes ago doesn't have television so he'd gone off somewhere to get a better view of what's going on. The result, well, we expect that sometime between 1:30 and 2:00 o'clock and we hope as you heard Mr. Foot say that we'll be get a chance to talk to him properly then"*
> – 1983 BBC Election Night Broadcast

Positioning hundreds of camera crews and reporters across constituencies is a feature of modern election broadcast enabled by improvements in communications technology. The decision to station reporters in the constituencies of party leaders begins from the 1966 broadcast. Limitations of broadcasting technology in 1966 restricted the BBC to only visiting nineteen locations outside the studio, a small but not insignificant number. Therefore, it is significant that producers chose to send reporters to the constituencies of party leaders. Advances in technology for mobile camera crews meant that, by 1987, reporters and camera teams were tasked with following one party leader throughout the night, following leaders from their houses, then to their constituency count and finally to the party headquarters. If party leaders continued to engage with broadcast journalists on election night, then this could

provide their reactions to results. However, in more recent elections with no engagement from party leaders, broadcasters simply commentate over footage of leaders arriving at counts and party headquarters. Host David Dimbleby explains during the 1997 broadcast that following the leaders is a primary objective during the night.

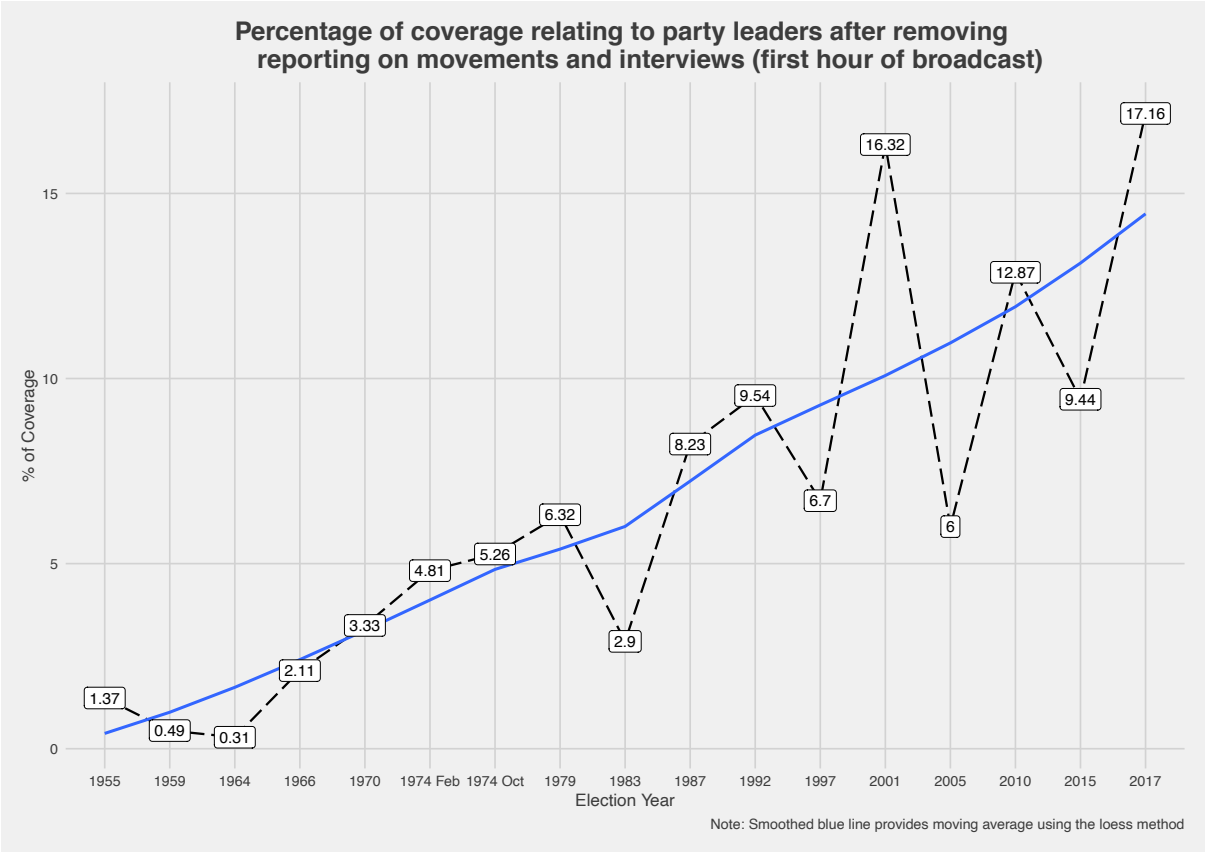
> *David Dimbleby: "…we are already at all the places that matter, the count at Sedgefield for Tony Blair [at] his Labour club, with the Tories in Huntington, with the Liberal Democrats in Yeovil we'll be following the party leaders and will be at the party headquarters."*
> – 1997 BBC Election Night Broadcast

Commentary on the whereabouts of party leaders increased further when the BBC started to use a helicopter to track the movement of leaders. Commentary over helicopter shots are used particularly in 1997 as the BBC track Blair triumphantly travelling down the motorway to Labour's victory celebrations. Up to the minute coverage of the whereabouts of party leaders offers very little substance into explaining the results. However, the decision to commentate over helicopter pictures of Blair is representative of the 'top billing' given to party leaders in election night coverage.

Figure 6.3 provides the percentage of coverage relating to party leaders over the first hour of the broadcast, after removing the 'step-by-step' reporting and interviews with leaders. As such, this graph predominantly captures discussion in the broadcast related to leaders. For example, examining the leaders campaign performance in retrospect. Discussion may not be directly related to early explanations of the election, particularly in the pre-exit poll era. Figure 6.3 displays a fairly clear trajectory of increases over time, albeit with notable variation between 1997-2017. Fluctuation in the coverage after 1997 may relate to uncertainty about the accuracy of exit polls caused by imprecise projections in previous elections. At two low points, 1997 and 2015, there is more caution about drawing too many conclusions about the overall result. The lasting memory of inaccuracy from the 1992 exit poll

prediction of a hung parliament likely had an effect on how the 1997 projection was interpreted. In the case of 2015, the exit poll was treated with greater caution after it conflicted with regular opinion polling conducted during the campaign. In contrast to Figure 6.1, the 2017 election now represents the high point of coverage, with 17.16% of the transcript related to the discussion of leaders. There is little reporting dedicated to the whereabouts and movements of leaders in the first hour of the 2017 broadcast, which may be a reflection of these 'step-by-step' reports offering little information to viewers. Instead, the focus of this coverage is primarily on the political consequences of the predicted outcome for Theresa May, and to a lesser extent, Jeremy Corbyn. In early broadcasts there is nearly no coverage dedicated to leaders beyond describing their whereabouts or interviewing them directly.

Figure 6.3: Percentage of Spoken Words Discussing Party Leaders (First Hour of Coverage)



Post 1983, broadcasters began to ask questions in the first hour of the broadcast that link party leaders to the projected outcome of the election. In 2005 broadcasters asked several Labour politicians if Labour's results would have been better without Blair as leader of the party. Similarly, in 1987, Robin Day questioned deputy Labour leader Roy Hattersley on why the 'dream team' leadership of Hattersley and Kinnock had not produced a better result for his party. Broadcasts also discuss whether leaders may have had a positive effect, for example conversation about whether Nick Clegg's surge during the 2010 campaign would be likely to help the Liberal Democrats keep marginal seats. With Conservative and Labour party leaders no longer talking to broadcasters during more recent election nights, broadcasters instead put questions about them to their political colleagues in an attempt to gain information.

It is important to distinguish between descriptive comments from journalists positioned outside the houses of party leaders, relatively bland (and often pre-recorded) interviews with leaders who often make no substantial comment during the program, and discussions of the possible explanations of election outcomes that centre on the role of leaders. The presence of all of these types of coverage indicate the importance of party leaders to the programme makers but content centred on explaining election outcomes and leaders' role in relation to them serves as a greater interest here, because of the role they play in helping to shape the unfolding narrative. The following sections examine different types of discussion about party leaders throughout the entirety of the broadcasts.

Leader performance, potential resignations and personal characteristics during election broadcasts

This section of the chapter focuses in greater detail on how election outcomes across the broadcasts are explained using different aspects relating to party leaders. In contrast to the 'step-by-step' descriptive coverage that was analysed above, this section focuses on the subjects of discussion that are related to party leaders in greater detail. In turn I present findings about leaders' campaign performance during the campaign, possible leadership succession and leader characteristics highlighted during the coverage. Overall the findings present a generally consistent pattern: modern election coverage has focused increasingly on campaign performance, leadership succession and analysis of personal qualities.

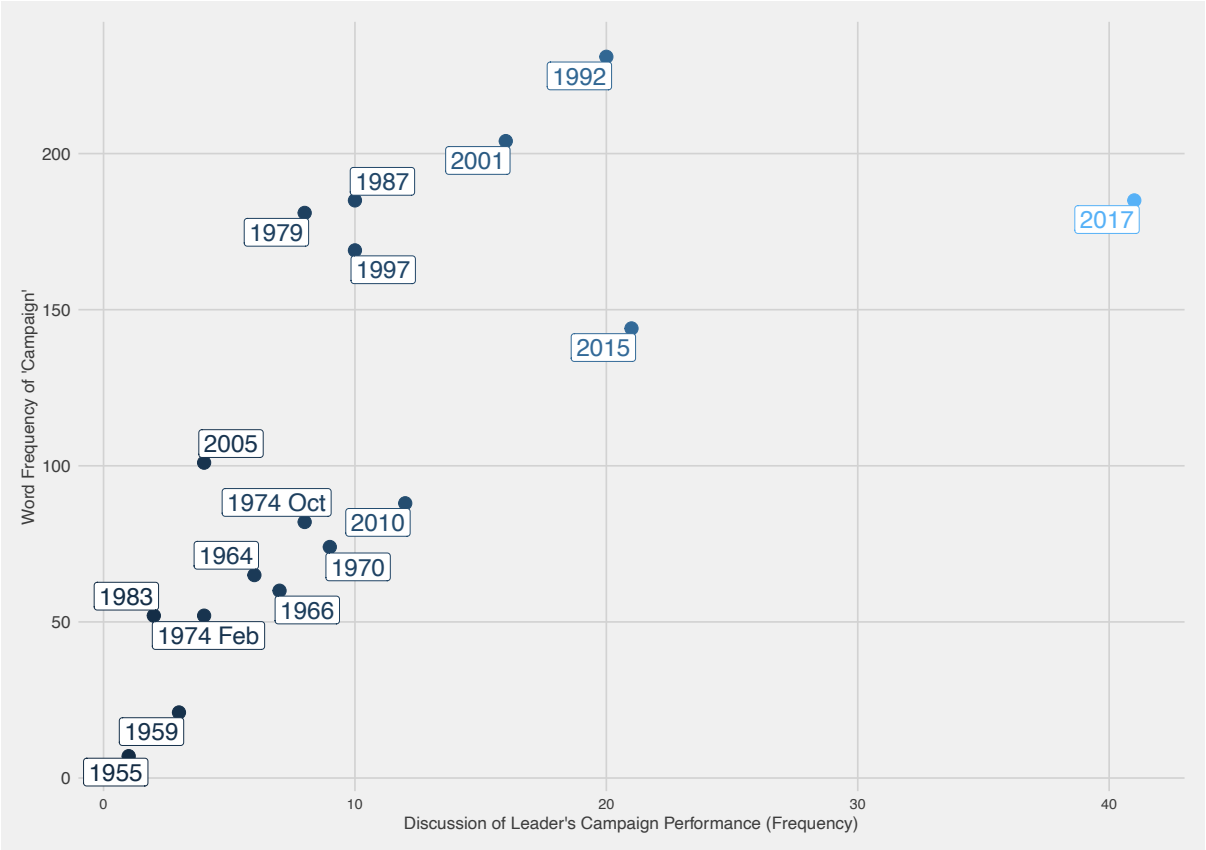
Party Leaders' Campaign Performance

The emphasis on party leaders' campaign performance from broadcast journalists and politicians alike has grown notably over the elections analysed. Of course, participants that feature in the broadcast have also followed the events of the campaign in detail, possibly

drawing on their own experience of the campaign. With leaders receiving significant media coverage during recent campaigns (Deacon et al. 2017; Denver, Carman, and Johns 2012; Gaber 2013), there is a marked increase in questions that relate to party leaders in modern elections. Evidence suggests the 1987 election represents a shift in coverage with a larger section dedicated to commenting on the performance of party leaders.

Figure 6.4 plots the frequency of the word 'campaign' against my manual codes that relate to leaders' campaign performance. In post-1987 elections party leaders' campaign performance is discussed more often in elections when the expected result is close. Close election results in 1992, 2015, and most notably in 2017, see a greater reflection during the coverage on the campaign performance of party leaders. This relationship suggests that broadcasters are aware that leaders matter more when the result is expected to be close. Anticipated landslide victories generally result in fewer questions on the performance of party leaders during the campaign. While the 1987 election did result in a landslide Conservative victory, the BBC's projection suggested a much smaller majority of 26, and Neil Kinnock was widely praised for his campaign performance in the broadcast coverage of this election. Analysis of William Hague's campaign performance in 2001 does provide an exception to the relationship between landslide victories and focus on leaders' campaign performance. Most Conservative politicians praised Hague's campaign efforts even after the Conservatives improved their seat total by one and Labour's landslide majority remained. Similarly, Liberal Democrat politicians were highly positive about the campaign performance of Charles Kennedy in the same election, seeking to portray him as the true star of the campaign.

Figure 6.4: Comments and Questions related to Campaign performance 1955-2017



The Conservative Party's leader-centric campaign in 2017 naturally led to evaluations of May's performance throughout election night. May's lacklustre performance compared to an invigorated Corbyn, naturally drew comparisons during the coverage. In turn, the campaign performance of Nicola Sturgeon in 2015, stemming from her strong performance in the televised debates received substantial attention from commentators. Meanwhile Labour MPs were broadly defensive of Ed Miliband's campaign performance when interviewed at different stages of the night. Coverage in 2010 is not distinctly focused on the campaign nor the performance of leaders, but noticeable attention was given to the new party leader debates. These debates received widespread media and public attention, resulting in a period of 'Cleggmania' when the Liberal Democrats and Nick Clegg were performing well in the polls. On election night, many participants in the broadcast coverage questioned why the Liberal Democrats were projected to lose seats. As this election was the

first to feature televised debates, there was certainly an expectation from some commentators that Nick Clegg's campaign performance would result in better results for the Liberal Democrats. Jeremy Vine explains that the campaign looked unlikely to have a strong observable effect based on the exit poll results:

> *Jeremy Vine: "…of course part of the story of the campaign was the surge, the so-called surge, for (the) Lib Dems that happened after the television debate and then the question about whether Nick Clegg might fight off the Conservatives successfully in lots of seats, well that surge, has ended up like this according to our exit poll: Lib Dem-Conservative battles, just a small swing to the Conservatives of two percent."*
> – 2010 BBC Election Night Broadcast

Given exit poll predictions in 2010 and 1987, broadcasters disproportionately focus their attention on the various configurations of possible governments, explanations of what a hung parliament means, and in 2010, protocols laid out in the Cabinet Manual. While the outcome remains unclear, broadcasters limit the time for retrospective analysis of the campaign. Therefore, contextual factors are likely to be influential in how much examination is given to the role of leaders in the campaign, as broadcast journalists first focus on possible outcomes before trying to explain the results. While the broadcasters' focus on leaders' campaign performances depends on the closeness of the election, the post-1987 elections discuss campaign performance more frequently on average than those which precede it, regardless of the perceived uncertainty of the outcome. In the pre-exit poll era, every election outcome was more uncertain, for a longer period of the broadcast, than is presently the case in modern elections.

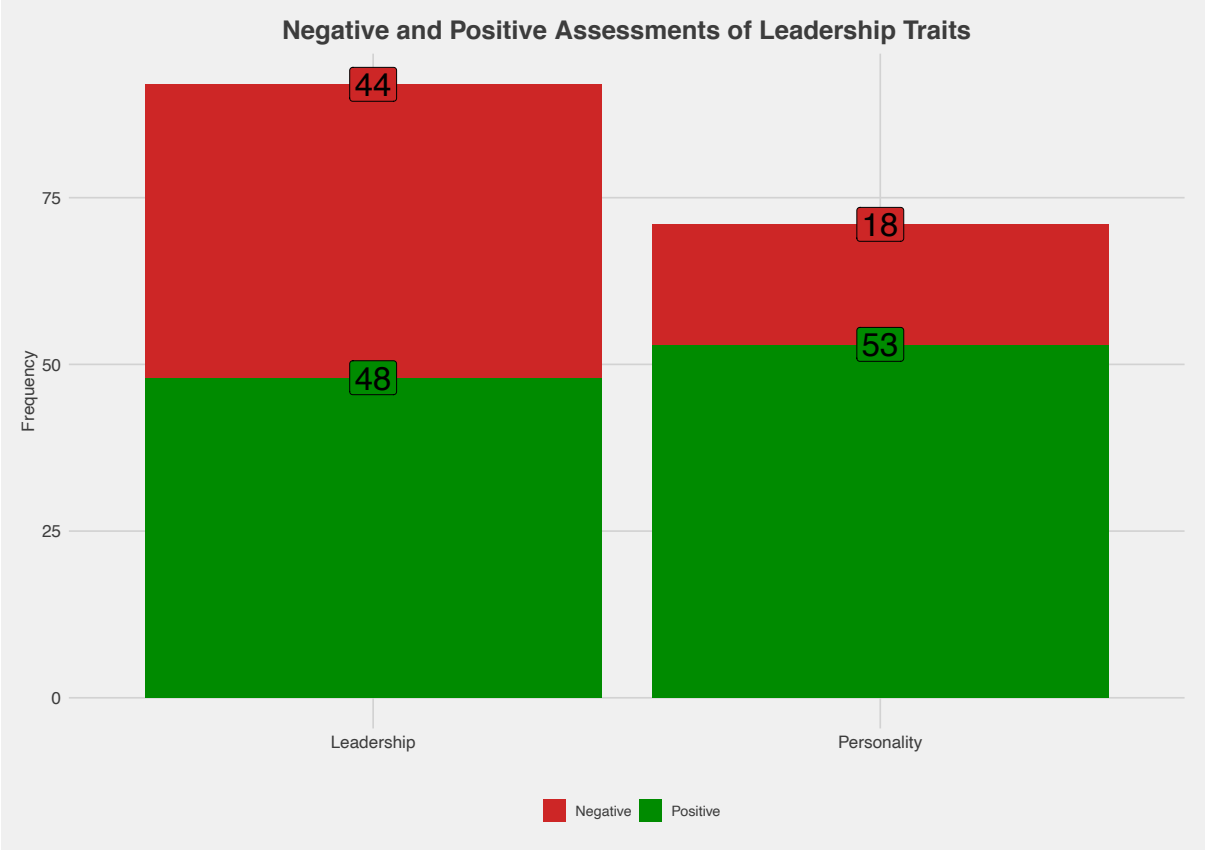
Leadership Skills and Personality traits

Assessments of party leaders' leadership abilities and personality traits are a key feature of broadcasters' efforts to explain the results of elections. Comments relating to leadership abilities incorporated a wide variety of terms, such as, 'experienced', 'decisive',

‘Prime Ministerial’ and ‘authoritative’. Remarks about leaders’ personalities incorporated terms such as, ‘honourable’, ‘trustworthy’ and ‘caring’ (see section 3.5 in the Research Methods Appendix for the full codebook). Evaluations of party leaders’ personality are treated as distinct from their leadership qualities. Of course, traits can be attributed to leaders positively and negatively. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the context in which the trait is used, and not just the trait itself.

Figure 6.5 summarises negative and positive assessments of party leaders across the dataset. References to leadership abilities are more finely balanced with positive and negative comments split fairly equally. Naturally, the partisanship of the contributor affects whether positive or negative comments are made about a leader. Positive comments regarding party leaders’ personality are more common from individuals who are defending their leader in the context of an election defeat.

Figure 6.5: Negative and Positive Assessments of Party Leaders' Personality and Leadership Abilities 1955-2017



John Major receives a sizeable amount of positive references to his personality despite his party's catastrophic loss in 1997. Throughout the broadcast Conservative politicians describe Major as 'dignified', 'honourable' and 'decent'. Ross and Joselyn (1988) found similar positive phrases were used to describe Walter Mondale during the US Presidential Election coverage in 1984, as he like Major, was defeated by a landslide margin. Positive remarks about Major's personality are forthcoming throughout the coverage, even when it becomes clear that Labour has achieved a decisive victory. Such comments give the impression that defeat for the Conservatives was somewhat inevitable and portray Major as an honourable captain solemnly going down with the sinking Conservative ship. These comments have the indirect effect of absolving Major of responsibility for the Conservative defeat. Michael Foot does not receive similar admiration during the 1983 broadcast when it unfolds that he led

Labour to a historic defeat. Assessments of leadership skills are more finely balanced as their absence or presence is identified as contributing to the failure or success of a party. For instance, Tony Blair's credibility is criticised during the 2005 election broadcast over the unfolding events since the 2003 Iraq War, and this is used to explain why Labour lost votes. Leadership skills are more frequently used in conjunction with interpreting the election outcome and to provide an early explanation of voter behaviour, whereas comments about a leader's personality are used to pay tribute to the efforts of leaders without being linked to the outcome. I provide a comparison of two comments about Tony Blair and John Major in 1997:

> *Robin Cook MP: "I think what happened tonight is a reflection of three things first of all the tremendous leadership of Tony Blair who has shown the world that he can lead the Labour Party and Britain now wants that leadership in charge of number 10"*
> – *1997 BBC Election Night Broadcast*

> *Katie Adie: "I think whatever is going to happen, and from his character and from the way that things are conducted, it would be dignified facing up to whatever has happened"*
> – *1997 BBC Election Night Broadcast*

Discussion of leaders' personality and leadership qualities is increasingly common following the 1992 election, featuring prominently in the two elections of the 1990s. This trend is not sustained into the early 2000s, though the number of comments remains higher than in pre-1990s coverage. From 1992 onwards there is a greater focus on individual leaders' personality and leadership skills, representing a change in the type of coverage and comment made by politicians.

Theresa May's lack of personality and robotic campaigning style during the 2017 election has subsequently been identified as detrimental to the Conservative election performance (Bale and Webb 2018). Her 'robotic' personality is mentioned frequently throughout the 2017 broadcast. In turn, commentators describe how assessments of Theresa

May worsened over a Conservative campaign framed around her supposed trait of 'strong leadership'. Post-1992, the 1997 election is the other election broadcast where comments regarding personality are more frequent than leadership traits. Positive assessments of Tony Blair's personality in appealing to the electorate complement remarks about his leadership skills. His successful restructure of the Labour Party, turning it into a successful electoral force is widely credited throughout the programme.

The 2010 and 2015 election broadcasts also focused significantly on leadership skills. The 2010 results compounded negative evaluations of Gordon Brown. Brown was considered to have lost the remainder of his authority as Prime Minister, following the predicted loss of Labour's majority from the exit poll results. Conservative MPs then attempted to link Brown's loss of authority to the negative personality trait of desperation, based on the assumption that Brown would attempt to remain Prime Minister. However, in 2015 Conservative MPs (in particular Michael Gove) claimed that the exit poll results, which did not predict a certain majority, were a personal endorsement of David Cameron's leadership. The absence of more discussion regarding party leaders' competencies and personality after the first hour of the 2015 broadcast is noteworthy. This is noteworthy because the Conservatives had attacked Miliband's personality for the entirety of his leadership of the Labour Party and was a point they emphasised in the 2015 campaign (Gaber 2017). Focus on leadership skills may be affected by the perceived closeness of an election, but there is no obvious relationship between the focus on different traits and the contextual factors of the elections. The salience of different leadership traits fluctuates across the period of elections covered. However, it is important to recognise that these traits are qualitatively different and used in different circumstances.

Leadership Succession and the Effect of Election Results on Political Capital

Election results have the potential to generate political capital for leaders, and as a consequence, cements their control in government and their party. Alternatively, on a bad night, the political capital of leaders can be wiped out. Questions regarding the resignation of leaders or possible successors have become increasingly common during the broadcasts. Broadcast journalists recognise the wider effects election night will have once the outcome of the election has been established. Questions directed to politicians, commentators and other broadcasters regarding the future of leaders have grown steadily in recent times. Contemporary election coverage directs a substantial amount of attention to the discussion of potential changes in leadership after the election. During broadcasts in the 1950s or 1960s politicians were rarely asked about the future of their leaders. During this period, Alec Douglas-Holme was the only leader to receive attention regarding whether he could continue in his position, because he was regarded as significantly out of touch with the public. However, there is no sustained speculation about whether Douglas-Holme would resign, with greater emphasis on the circumstances in which he became Prime Minister and Conservative leader.

Evidence suggests that broadcasters have recognised that parties are ready to replace leaders who preside over electoral failures (Andrews and Jackman 2008; So 2018). Leaders who have lost multiple elections, such as Ted Heath, would be unlikely to survive in the current political climate. The future of leaders has therefore become one of the key issues discussed in election night coverage. Questions about leadership succession were first asked in October 1974 but are more frequent from 1987 onwards. There is no doubt that the inclusion of forecasts and exit polls has accelerated the level of coverage given to leadership succession by providing earlier indications of the likely result. In some cases, exit polls can

lead to leadership succession speculation about the 'wrong' leader. Based only on the early forecast of the 1992 exit poll, broadcasters and Labour politicians prematurely speculated over whether John Major could continue as Prime Minister and Conservative Leader. As the 1992 result became clear, the emphasis switched to whether Neil Kinnock will survive as leader of the Labour party after leading them to a second defeat under his leadership and a fourth consecutive defeat for the Labour Party. The following excerpts provide illustrations of broadcasters' interest in who will replace leaders of parties that are expected to be defeated.

> *Peter Sissons:* "*Could I now put it to you that Neil Kinnock is now established as a loser and you could not risk fighting another election under his leadership"*
> – Questioning Labour MP Paul Boateng, 1992 BBC Election Broadcast

> *Robin Day: "…will you be a candidate for the leadership if Michael Foot decides to go?"*
> – Questioning Labour MP Eric Varley, 1983 BBC Election Broadcast

> *Robin Day: "If Labour does win comfortably, do you think this is the end of Edward Heath as a political leader?"*
> – Questioning Conservative Lord Boothby, October 1974 BBC Election Broadcast

The excerpts reflect how broadcast journalists frame questions about possible changes to party leadership when interviewing politicians. In some instances, broadcasters begin to speculate about possible successors, going beyond questioning whether an individual could remain leader. Discussion of leadership succession reached its peak in 2001 with Blair's second landslide burying William Hague's chances of remaining Conservative leader. On the basis of the exit poll, Hague resigning as Conservative leader is effectively understood to be a formality by broadcasters, even with only one constituency (Sunderland South), officially declared. In anticipation of the 'silent landslide', the BBC had commissioned polling on current and former Conservative voters in 2001 on which individual they would like to replace William Hague. Respondents were given Michael Portillo, Anne Widecombe, Ken Clarke and Ian Duncan Smith as possible successors. Peter Snow presents the analysis on possible future

Conservative leaders to viewers, showing Michael Portillo to be the favoured candidate among current Conservative voters. Extraordinarily, Jeremy Paxman uses this polling evidence to question Michael Portillo, who happens to be in the BBC studio as a participant in the broadcast, whether he is encouraged by the polling results to be a candidate to replace William Hague. Throughout the rest of the coverage, broadcasters work on the assumption that Hague is destined to be replaced. Fixation with a possible change in Conservative leadership is unsurprising considering how few seats changed hands in 2001 and leadership speculation was a subject to debate in an election with a clear outcome.

Whilst it is not supported with polling evidence, there are suggestions throughout the 1992 coverage that Labour would have been more successful if John Smith had replaced Kinnock as leader. Similar 'what ifs' are pondered with regard to Dennis Healey being a possible replacement for Michael Foot in 1983. What is clear from the coverage is that broadcast journalists raise the possibility that different leadership could have had an effect, either directly or indirectly, on the outcome of the election.

Politicians interviewed on the programme are often asked if they would be interested in entering a future leadership election. Such questioning tends to elicit a scripted response that is either an outright rejection or a comment that there was 'no vacancy'. Politicians are naturally cautious when responding to questions regarding new leadership and hesitant to declare their candidacy before a leader has resigned. Andrew Marr addresses this issue in 2001:

> *Andrew Marr: "I bet one prediction, any Conservative who says on this programme tonight that they would like the leadership and like William Hague to stand down will never be the leader, that's why they're all being so cautious."*
> – 2001 BBC Election Night Broadcast

As a result, broadcasters asking about leadership ambitions are usually swiftly rebuffed by politicians, generating little insight. However, asking participants such as political commentators and other journalists can generate more detailed speculation with regard to who may be likely to replace leaders in the coming weeks; with greater freedom to name individuals as possible replacements.

While questions and discussion regarding leadership succession are predominantly negative, party leaders can also gain political capital, resulting in positive discussion and questioning. Nick Clegg's performance in the 2010 campaign shielded him from speculation about potential succession following the Liberal Democrat's disappointing results at the ballot box. Additionally, broadcasters evaluated that Ted Heath's performance during the 1966 election campaign was enough to solidify his position as Conservative leader even though Labour won a comfortable majority.

Outperforming expectations going into election night can result in leaders gaining substantial political capital in what broadcasters frame as a make or break election for their leadership. Jeremy Corbyn in 2017 serves as the prime example of this, where his position at the top of the Labour party was secured after Labour gained seats and outperformed expectations. Despite internal troubles within Labour, speculation was that anti-Corbyn MPs were unlikely to challenge the leadership of the party until after the 2017 election results, where Labour widely expected to lose seats. Broadcasters directly accused Labour MPs of wanting poor election results to ensure the demise of Corbyn's leadership of the party. However, based on the results in 2017, Laura Kuenssberg provides the following analysis of the impact of the result on Corbyn's position as leader:

> *Laura Kuenssberg: "One thing we can say for sure is that Jeremy Corbyn is safe as leader of the Labour Party, so long as he wants to be. He's had a great campaign."*
> – 2017 BBC Election Night Broadcast

These election results were interpreted as a personal vindication for Jeremy Corbyn and the decisions he made as Labour leader. However, while the safety of Corbyn remaining leader was raised on ten separate occasions during the broadcast, the issue of whether Theresa May could continue as party leader was raised on twenty-five occasions. BBC broadcasters concentrate on whether Theresa May would be forced to resign, rather than Jeremy Corbyn solidifying his position as Labour leader. Broadcasters have become more detailed in their speculation of potential successors and this has become a key section of the narrative when assessing probable consequences of the election. Discussion about whether incumbents can continue as leader indirectly questions whether the election outcome can be attributed to their leadership. The next section examines the responsibility attributed to party leaders for the election result.

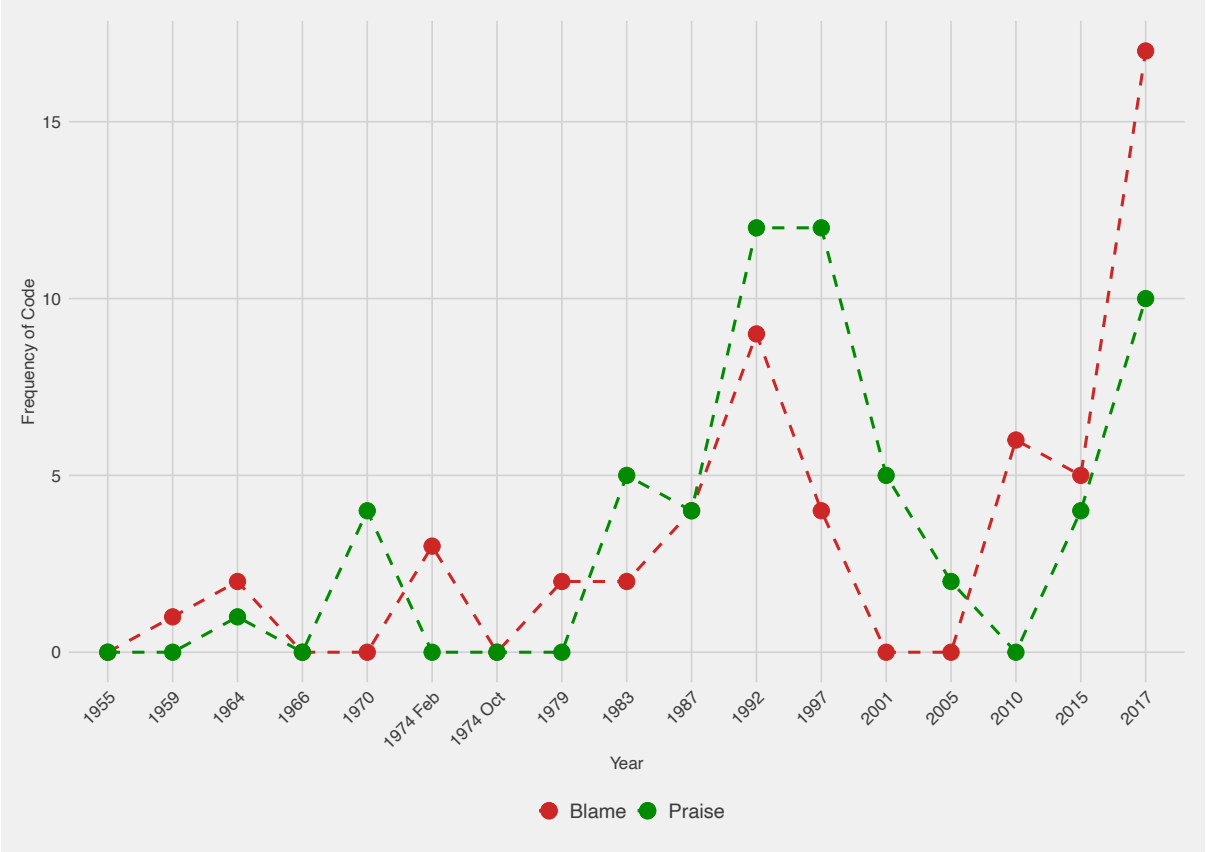
"She has blown it" – Attributing Blame to Party Leaders

Party leaders provide a clear figurehead for broadcasters, opponents and supporters to applaud when a party is successful and a clear target to blame when a party loses an election. Praising and blaming party leaders for election results is not done lightly, particularly early in election coverage, when the result can be unclear. I coded the transcripts for explicit and implicit blame and praise during the coverage. The magnitude of an election win is a significant factor that impacts the level of blame or praise of leaders. Election night coverage of landslide victories feature fewer comments that blame the losing party leader for the result. More frequent criticism of leaders is found in close elections, with the perception that the election was winnable. Moreover, the group of actors that engage in the process of blaming or praising leaders is noticeably different. Journalists and broadcasters are more

likely to attribute blame for poor results, while politicians are more likely to praise their own leaders.

Responsibility for the election results attributed to leaders does not follow a steady trajectory for the elections covered. Evidence presented in Figure 6.6 demonstrates that blame and praise for leaders is rare in broadcasts before the 1980s. There is a considerable increase during the 1990s, before blame and praise dip in subsequent elections before resurfacing strongly in the 2015 and 2017 elections.

Figure 6.6: Praise and Blame of Party Leaders for Election Result (1955-2017)



The trend demonstrated in the graph demonstrates that praise and criticism does not follow a neat linear trajectory. Rather, this relationship is likely due to contextual factors that influence each election and the expectations leading into election night. Landslide election victories often produce substantial praise for the leader of the victorious party and little criticism of leaders who have been comprehensively defeated. Politicians of parties that

achieved landslide victories are instinctively positive about their leader being an electoral asset. Praise for Blair in 1997 and Thatcher in 1983 provide two examples of this.

> *Robin Cook MP: "…a tremendous achievement, if as it appears to be, we are on course for a great victory, an achievement above all by Tony Blair…"*
> – 1997 BBC Election Night Broadcast

> *Francis Pym MP: "…it's quite clear that the country has expressed very strong confidence in the Conservative government under Mrs. Thatcher…"*
> – 1983 BBC Election Night Broadcast

Praise for party leaders is acknowledged both in their personal appeal and their skill in running a successful campaign. For instance, the Conservative win in 2015 was credited largely to David Cameron's personal appeal over Ed Miliband, whereas Tony Blair was praised for showing the strong leadership skills of a potential Prime Minister in 1997. Leadership traits that were discussed in an earlier section are identified here as reasons why the leaders' party were successful.

In contrast, criticism for losing party leaders is less frequent during landslide defeats. Little blame is attributed to William Hague during the 2001 coverage. There is no sense from commentators or politicians that Hague should be blamed for the Labour victory. While the focus is on who will succeed Hague, there is little personal blame attached to him for the party's defeat. Expectations of another substantial Labour victory, supported by opinion polling leading into election night, gave the impression that no Conservative leader could have changed the result. Likewise, the 1983 coverage places little personal blame on Michael Foot, aside from Foot himself publicly stating that he would need to accept personal responsibility for Labour's defeat.

Criticism of party leaders is more common when results are closer and the expectations before polling day are contrary to the actual results. In 2017, when opinion polling in the campaign suggested the Conservatives would likely win a stable majority,

Theresa May is attributed significant blame for the party losing seats. Another contributing factor to the blame received by May during the coverage was her campaigning style, which had been widely criticised (Bale & Webb, 2018). Lastly, through calling a general election earlier than the fixed election date of May 2020, after repeatedly ruling out an early election, Theresa May created a highly personalised narrative that translated into damning criticism and blame during the broadcast. Laura Kuenssberg offers the following criticism of May in 2017:

> *Laura Kuenssberg: "Tonight is a disaster for Theresa May. She called this election voluntarily. She didn't need to. She thought she could steam-roller the opposition and cruise to a landslide victory and she is left tonight facing a disastrous election result."*
> – 2017 BBC Election Night Broadcast

There is no doubt that the circumstances surrounding the election led to such cutting criticism. It is important to note that these comments were made based on exit poll projections and demonstrates how confidence in the forecasts have grown, with harsh criticism made early in the broadcast. May is blamed more than any party leader since broadcasts began but she is not the only leader blamed for election results.

In 1992 Kinnock receives a notable amount of blame for the Labour Party losing their fourth successive general election, despite opinion polls and the exit poll indicating he might be Prime Minister by the end of the night. Due to the closeness of the result Kinnock receives both praise and criticism as politicians react to the exit poll and results in real time. At the beginning of the broadcast Labour politicians Jack Cunningham and Brian Gould were praising Kinnock's leadership of the Labour Party, claiming the results as a personal victory for their leader. As the Conservative victory became apparent, broadcasters and politicians from rival parties began to become critical of Kinnock and sought to make him accountable for Labour's defeat. Liberal Democrat Shirley Williams provided the following criticism of Kinnock:

Shirley Williams MP: "I think one reason for that was because of things like the Sheffield rally which suddenly showed Neil Kinnock in a triumphalist mode and I think many people even now are frightened of a Kinnock government"
– 1992 BBC Election Night Broadcast

Personal criticisms of Kinnock and May offer the most extreme examples of blame on election night following expectations that they would both win majorities. Brown and Miliband both received personal criticism for the elections that they lost but to a lesser extent. This level of criticism is interesting because while Labour may have not thought they would have an overall majority in 2015, there was an expectation that they could be the largest party. Conversely, leaders who produce unexpected election successes such as Major in 1992 and Jeremy Corbyn in 2017 are seen as responsible for their party's success.

Broadcasters, politicians, academics and journalists all have freedom to praise or criticise party leaders at various points throughout the election coverage. Table 6.2 provides a summary of the frequency of blame and praise from broadcasters and politicians for the election covered in the data set. Broadcasters are more frequent in blaming party leaders, whilst politicians are more likely to praise leaders.

Table 6.2: Praise and Blame of Party Leaders from Broadcasters and Politicians 1955-2017

Group of Actors	Blame	Praise
Broadcaster	31	21
Politician	23	35

As highly partisan actors, politicians are swift to draw attention and heap praise on leaders when they have won. Often, they claim the party's victory is a testament to their leadership. Of course, political actors also have personal reasons, such as career advancement, for praising their leaders. Praise from winning politicians is frequent from Conservative politicians in 1992 and Labour politicians in 1997, with both Major and Blair commended for their respective roles in these victories. Claiming a leader directly contributed

to the victory or loss of a close general election is an important aspect of the wider narrative that follows on from election night.

Conservative politicians use these tactics both in 2010 and 2015 but in slightly different ways. The 2010 broadcasts see several Conservative politicians stress that Gordon Brown, rather than the Labour Party, has lost the election. Attributing blame to Gordon Brown for Labour's projected losses is central to the Conservative Party attempting to shape the narrative that it would be inconceivable that Brown could continue as Prime Minister after the election. Labour MPs attempted something similar in 1992, arguing that Major no longer had the authority to continue as Prime Minister based on early projections of the exit poll. In 2015 Conservative politicians employed a similar tactic to praise their own leader, David Cameron, as responsible for winning the election immediately after the exit poll was released. Comments made by Michael Gove illustrate this point:

> *Michael Gove MP: "It would be an unprecedented vote of confidence in David Cameron's leadership and in particular in the message that we have reinforced throughout this campaign."*
>
> *Michael Gove MP: "If the exit poll is right, with caveats, then David Cameron has won a handsome victory."*
> – 2015 BBC Election Night Broadcast

When Michael Gove made these comments, it was not yet clear that the Conservatives would win an overall majority based on the exit poll prediction. It appears that Conservative politicians respond to this uncertain outcome by attempting to head off any potential narratives that Miliband and Labour could claim a right to govern. This finding provides further detail to the argument made by Cowley and Kavanagh (2016), that during election night coverage Labour and Conservative politicians attempted to assert their party's legitimacy to govern in 2015. The shock to Conservatives during the 2017 broadcast is apparent and questioning begins about Theresa May's decision to call an early election. Blame

and praise for leaders is naturally framed around partisan lines, with politicians attempting to shape how the election result is processed by the media.

Broadcasters, journalists and academics are more likely to blame leaders for their party's failings. Presenters are more implicit in their blame of party leaders. Often, they imply that the leader has performed poorly or load their questions with the assumption that leadership had a negative effect on the decisions of voters. For example, in 1997 John Major's response during the 'Cash for Questions' scandal, is portrayed as a personal error of Major's, which contributed to the perception of sleaze around the party. Not all broadcasters are implicit in their questioning and Jeremy Paxman provides an illustration of this when he summarises Labour's poor results in 2010 to an ill-informed Ed Balls interviewed from his count:

> *Ed Balls MP: "I don't really know what's happened in the last hour or so"*
>
> *Jeremy Paxman: "Well, let me tell you what's happened, Gordon Brown has taken your party down to defeat"*
>
> – 2010 BBC Election Night Broadcast

Broadcasters, journalists and academics are freer to make criticisms of leaders, especially as politicians are careful not to pass judgement while the full set of results is still unknown. 2017 provides a clear case of an election where a range of broadcasters were quick to blame Theresa May's role in the election following the unexpected exit poll prediction. Broadcasters do also praise party leaders, especially when they have won unexpected elections or by a landslide margin.

Party leaders are considered responsible for their party's performance in contemporary election broadcasts. Contextual factors surrounding the election are crucial to understanding how much blame or praise is given to leaders, but it is demonstrated in this chapter how this can help shape the initial explanation of results. Different groups of actors

attribute responsibility to leaders in different ways and for different reasons, but they commonly share the view that actions taken by leaders are pivotal to understanding the outcome of the election.

Conclusion

Party leaders have developed from peripheral figures to the headliners of election night coverage. How election results are understood and initial explanations for victory and defeat provide the basis for the post-election narrative. While the primary purpose of the coverage continues to be to relay the results to viewers, this analysis of the content of BBC election night broadcasts has demonstrated a shift over time to more of a focus on the role of party leaders. Leaders are mentioned within the first seconds of modern coverage and are seen as central figures for framing the discussion of the election. Until 1992, party leaders engaged with the broadcast media directly on election night and, despite their more recent reluctance to do so, party leaders were followed increasingly closely as producers of the coverage considered it important to track their every move. In recent elections, party leaders are introduced quickly to viewers as key figures for interpreting the election result. This could have implications for how voters understand election outcomes as the emphasis shifts to the winning party leader and away from the winning party. Furthermore, with the coverage showcasing leaders, it has an impact on how initial explanations of elections are understood.

Beyond descriptive reporting of the leaders' whereabouts, substantive discussion of the leaders' role in the campaign and their personal appeal have received greater attention during recent election night broadcasts. I find that broadcasters make strong links between the personal appeal of leaders and their performance in the campaign when explaining election outcomes. Changes in the way election narratives are framed shift from a battle

between two parties, to a battle between two leaders, which focuses on the office of Prime Minister. There is a greater understanding that the campaign has the potential to change the outcome of the election and broadcasters recognise the significant role of leaders in campaigns. In addition, election results have a marked effect on the political capital of leaders, and this is emphasised in more recent coverage. From 1997 onwards there is a wider expectation that if leaders preside over a defeat, they are very likely to be replaced. Speculation about potential replacements for party leaders becomes a subject of interest for participants to debate. Narratives of election night are developed beyond which party won and lost to which leaders will be replaced or have become untouchable. Responsibility for the election results is attributed with greater regularity to leaders in modern coverage. In contrast, coverage in the 50s, 60s and 70s placed little responsibility for the result on party leaders. Politicians are quick to praise the work of their leader when they win, while other participants readily blame leaders for their party's defeat.

The analysis has detailed the nuances of individual elections within the broader findings, explaining how contextual factors are influential as to how the narrative is constructed during the program. For instance, if results are contrary to expectations leading into election night, greater blame is attributed to the leader expected to win for not being able to carry their party into office. Where pre-election expectations are confirmed early in the broadcast, such as the 2001 election, broadcasters attempt to keep the narrative interesting by focusing on potential consequences of the result. Importantly, narratives about leaders can also change as the results become clearer, as more results are announced. The exit poll has a clear and influential effect in this regard. With forecasts leading the early election night coverage, broadcasters can begin to focus on the implications of the results even before any actual constituency results have been officially declared. Exit polls also

facilitate greater discussion of party leaders during the first hour of the broadcast, beyond simple descriptive commentary on where leaders are located.

Chapter 7 : Conclusion

Party leader effects are complex. The application of advanced quantitative techniques on panel data in this thesis has served to establish the relative stability of leader evaluations and pinpoint when leaders have an influential effect on vote choice. Chapter Four examined how evaluations of leaders change over time, including the impact of new leadership, rival leader evaluations and voter characteristics on the stability of evaluations. Chapter Five considered the effect of party leader evaluations on vote choice at two general elections by building on previous studies using campaign effects and the persuasiveness of leaders. This approach proved effective in measuring whether changes in leadership evaluations during the campaign could persuade voters and boost electoral prospects. The thesis then turned to examine party leaders within election night broadcasts, with Chapter Six investigating how leaders are understood to have affected election outcomes. Discussion of party leaders on election night was found to have grown steadily over time and their role increasingly takes centre stage during the analysis of election results. Taken together, these chapters contribute to existing research on party leaders via methodological advancement, the construction of original data, and their focus on research questions that have been underexplored in the existing literature.

This conclusion reflects on the analysis contained in the previous chapters and summarises the findings in relation to the three main hypotheses. Presenting the findings in this way makes strong links to the theoretical and empirical literature on party leaders introduced in Chapter Two. The conclusion ends by presenting opportunities for future research on the subject of party leaders, based on the findings of this thesis.

Summary of Findings

Rival leaders and new leadership provide better explanations of changes in leadership evaluations than the characteristics of voters

Most voters' evaluations of party leaders were found to be fairly stable and did not change drastically over the panel. How voters adjust their evaluations of party leaders over time has not been considered on the level of detail presented in this thesis. Individual-level changes in evaluations suggested voters re-evaluate leaders over time, but while these changes are noticeable, they are often only small changes. Few voters are likely to change their evaluation of a leader significantly between waves. Butler and Stokes (1969, 1974) suggested that evaluations of party leaders were a 'short-term' influence on vote choice. However, the stability of evaluations found in Chapter Four, suggest that leader evaluations should be considered a 'long-term' influence on voters. Voters may differ in what they consider to be an ideal-type leader, but the continuity in the evaluations of individual leaders suggests that overall assessments of leaders are unlikely to change dramatically after they are initially constructed.

New leadership caused the most substantial change in individual evaluations of party leaders. This is an important finding because it demonstrates voters distinguish between outgoing leaders and their replacements. The findings demonstrate that incoming leaders have the potential to develop their own appeal to voters, independent of their party, but that initial evaluations can be difficult to change later in their tenure as leader. This finding raises important questions about how long new leaders have to attract new voters after becoming leader, before evaluations become settled. Once evaluations of leaders stabilise, it may take a major political event for voters to change long-held assessments. No evidence was found

that leadership evaluations change more during general election campaign waves than in other waves of the panel.

In addition, strong evidence was found that change in evaluations are made relatively to rival leaders, supporting previous studies that have highlighted this psychological effect (Goffin and Olson 2011; Mughan 2015). The effects of relative changes in evaluations were found in both Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Evidence of relative changes between the four leaders of the largest parties in British politics (at this time) suggests that evaluations not only reflect voter comparisons between Prime Ministers and Leaders of the Opposition, but also in relation to the leaders of smaller parties. While leaders of smaller parties have effectively no chance of becoming Prime Minister, they remain relevant and important to voters' evaluations of leaders. As a result, it may be worthwhile reconsidering the effect of leaders of smaller parties in past elections. If voters' feelings about the leaders of smaller parties contribute to how they feel about major party leaders, leaders of smaller parties may have a stronger influence than previously thought. Furthermore, previous research has found that voters associate particular leadership traits with the leaders of left-wing and right-wing political parties (Bittner 2014; Hayes 2005). While this study considered the effect of a new incumbent on general like-dislike assessments, it would be worthwhile investigating whether new leadership has the same effect on assessments of specific traits.

Characteristics of voters were less convincing in explaining changes in leadership evaluations. Literature surrounding party identification and partisanship suggested that these voters would have the most stable evaluations about leaders because their partisanship has a strong effect on their evaluations (Barisione 2009; Bittner 2014). In turn, non-partisans' leadership evaluations were expected to be more responsive. Another theorised relationship related to 'unsophisticated' voters, who were expected to change their evaluations more

often because they rely on leader assessments more heavily for deciding their vote choice (Gidengil 2013; Mughan 2015; Rico 2014). Additionally, voters who consumed more televised political coverage were expected to change their evaluations more frequently (Lenz and Lawson 2011; Rico 2014). Results found the effect of these variables were minor, and were inconsistent across the models, relative to new leadership and changes in the evaluations of other party leaders. In some cases, party identifiers were more likely than those without party identification to change their evaluations. These findings illustrated that the type of voter has little effect on changes in evaluations of leaders and that it is more likely other factors, such as comparing the performance of different leaders or new leadership that matter the most.

Party leaders are crucial in understanding campaign effects and why voters convert during the campaign

Leadership evaluations made before general election campaigns are one of several important pre-campaign variables that can be used to make fairly accurate predictions about subsequent vote choice. The overall accuracy of predictive models was between 80-90% in the Labour and Conservative models in 2015 and 2017. This finding largely follows the expectations in the literature about the campaign having minimal effects on vote choice (Clarke et al. 2004; Finkel 1993; Finkel and Schrott 1995; Harrop and Miller 1987). In each case, evaluations of leaders had a net effect in producing more accurate predictions about the decisions that voters ultimately made. Most voters follow a predictable path for vote choice in general elections, but a substantial proportion of voters (10-20%) could not be easily predicted based on pre-campaign attitudes, indicating that the campaign is more influential on the decisions made by these voters.

Based on the predicted values gained from these models, voters were isolated who were more likely to be persuaded by the campaign than other voters. For this reason, the group was labelled 'goldilocks' voters because their views indicated they had a realistic chance of being persuaded during the campaign. It was an important step to acknowledge voters' pre-existing attitudes and who voters would realistically consider voting for during the campaign. I suggest this term as one that is more precise than 'floating' voters, 'late deciders' or 'swing' voters (Gidengil 2013; Mayer 2007; McAllister 2003; Russo 2014). This group of persuadable voters was found to be specific to both parties examined. Voters who were considered goldilocks voters for Labour, were not the same individuals who were considered to be goldilocks voters for the Conservatives. Positive changes in leadership evaluations during the campaign have a powerful effect in persuading goldilocks voters to move towards a party. Likewise, negative change in evaluations of rival party leaders has a noticeable effect in some of the models, while changes in partisanship over the campaign also have a strong effect on these voters' eventual choices. The effect from rival party leaders was observed on goldilocks in voting for Labour and the Conservatives in 2017, with weaker effects from rival leaders found in the 2015 results. Comparing the effect of change in leadership evaluations in 2015 and 2017 was useful because of the distinctive differences in how leader evaluations changed at the aggregate level. While the 2015 campaign did not have the same dramatic storyline as 2017, changes in leadership evaluations continued to have strong effects for Conservative goldilocks voters but weaker effects for Labour.

Calculating campaign effect categories led to some wider findings on the UK general election campaigns of 2015 and 2017. Findings suggested that the most stable vote was the Conservative vote in 2017, which exhibited the highest percentage of reinforcement effects from the four cases examined. Despite a campaign where there was little observable change

in evaluations or vote intention in 2015, 15% of the Conservative and Labour vote was considered to be from activation or conversion effects. Although, because effects were similar between the two parties, it resulted in little observable change at the aggregate level. In contrast, a third of Labour's vote in 2017 came from activation or conversion effects, making the effects of the campaign highly observable. The case of Labour in 2017 illustrates that whilst conversion may be considered the holy grail of campaign effects, activation can be just as important (Erickson and Wlezien 2012). Nonetheless, the predominant effect of the campaign across all cases was reinforcement, reaffirming expectations from previous studies on US campaigns, that most voters' pre-campaign vote choice remains consistent through to polling day (Wlezien and Erikson 2002).

Explanations of the result in BBC election night broadcasts have moved party leaders from the periphery to the centre

Election night broadcasts have increasingly focussed upon party leaders to provide early explanations of election outcomes. Evaluations of party leader performance during the preceding campaign occupy a central role in BBC broadcasters' attempts to explain electoral outcomes since 1987, especially when dramatic campaigns precede election night, or the election outcome was projected to be close. Broadcasters and politicians alike have a perception that either the campaign as a whole or specific campaign events could have had a decisive impact on the results. However, results presented in Chapter Five imply that changes in voters' evaluations of party leaders during the campaign were unlikely to impact vote choice for the majority of voters. Furthermore, broadcast journalists and political colleagues identify leaders as a primary cause for why parties have won or lost an election. The tendency to examine how leaders contributed to the election result gives parties an opportunity to

maximise their political capital of party leaders, developing findings from previous studies that have highlighted how leaders gain from this coverage in the post-election environment (Cathcart 1997; Hale 1993; Mendelsohn 1998). Party leaders' effect on the election outcome may be exaggerated during the broadcast, especially by politicians with obvious political interests. Endorsements or rejections of party leaders may become especially important with unexpected outcomes and close results, where the battle to control the election narrative becomes more important (Cowley and Kavanagh 2016, 2018; Kavanagh and Cowley 2010). This tendency was particularly evident among Conservative politicians in 2010 and 2015 to support their claims to have secured the legitimacy to govern, but also from some Labour politicians in 2017 arguing that Corbyn should continue as leader.

Coverage devoted to party leaders during election night broadcasts represents a transformation, from being minor features in the 1950s and 1960s, to defining them as key actors that results are framed around since the 1980s. Modern broadcast journalists mention party leaders mere seconds after the election night coverage has begun, placing them firmly in the centre of the unfolding narrative. The purpose of election night coverage has remained the same since its original conception (Crick 2018; Orr 2015) but there has been a clear development in the level of coverage centred on party leaders. Leaders are mentioned with increasing frequency and occupy a greater percentage of the opening hour of coverage. However, the overall focus on leaders has tailed off since 2001. Interest in leaders has been largely descriptive, especially during the 1980s and 1990s where the movements of individual leaders were reported on frequently. Discussion of leaders has since transitioned into more substantial questioning and more detailed debate about leaders in contemporary elections. After removing descriptive reporting of party leaders there has been a steady trend of greater

examination of leaders' performance during the campaign, their traits and whether the result is ultimately their responsibility.

The context and expectations for election results have an important effect for understanding leaders' role in the outcome of elections and the level of attention given to leaders. From the 1992 election broadcast onwards, greater focus is placed on whether underperforming party leaders should stand down. The 2001 broadcast contains the greatest focus on leadership succession, because the result was (correctly) predicted to be a repeat of the 1997 landslide by the exit poll and broadcasters therefore chose to focus on William Hague's future in detail. In contrast, the 2010 campaign which focused intently on the leaders of the three largest parties, attributed less focus on change in leadership because the projected result was the first hung parliament since February 1974. The dramatic campaign of the 2017 election and the reversal of fortunes for Theresa May, from looking likely to win a healthy majority to losing the slim majority she had, led to greater interest in leaders in the broadcast. From the 2001 broadcast onwards, there is a greater assumption from participants in the broadcast that leaders who oversee electoral failure will be replaced. More broadly, the trend of holding leaders individually responsible for the election result means that leaders are likely to only be given a single opportunity in persuading voters. Leaders are now more likely to be aware that they will be replaced if they are considered to have failed to deliver in elections. The findings presented in Chapter Four, that most voters' evaluations of leaders are stable over time, provides good supporting evidence to justify the removal of party leaders if their party performs poorly.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this section I outline seven recommendations for future research based on the findings presented in this thesis. My recommendations consider the theoretical, empirical and methodological points raised by the results presented in this thesis.

My first suggestion is for regular data collection on voter evaluations of specific leadership traits. The British Election Study Internet Panel enabled several aspects of analysis in this thesis. However, when studying changes over time, I was limited to analysing the like-dislike evaluations of party leaders. While like-dislike evaluations provide a powerful indicator of vote choice, confining examinations of leadership effects to this measure, is likely to conceal some of the nuances in leadership evaluations. While specific traits may have been highly correlated in the past (Clarke et al. 2009a), leading them to be dropped from British Election Study (BES) questionnaires, they may no longer be as highly correlated now or in the future. Previous research has indicated that the salience of leadership traits can fluctuate between elections (Evans and Andersen 2005), providing an additional reason to analyse individual-level changes in traits. The availability of such data would offer an opportunity to analyse the stability of these specific evaluations and whether new leadership has the same effect on specific traits as on general evaluations. Since November 2016, evaluations of leaders' 'integrity' and 'competence' have been included in some waves of the British Election Study Internet Panel. Although, as was the case with some predictor variables of interest in Chapter Four, 'integrity' and 'competency' are not recorded for every wave of the panel. Similarly, the irregularity in time between waves added further differences and caveats when comparing between models. This is no criticism of the BES, which deliberately structures waves around election events, but access to a source of data that is collected more regularly

would have added further consistency when drawing conclusions from the findings of empirical work.

My second suggestion for future research is to reconsider party leader effects in previous campaigns. One potential leader to consider is Nick Clegg. Chapter Six highlighted how participants in election night broadcasts expected Nick Clegg's campaign performance in 2010 to translate into better results for the Liberal Democrats. While during the period of 'Cleggmania', his approval ratings skyrocketed, this may not have been reflected in voters' like-dislike evaluations of Clegg, as these evaluations were demonstrated to be fairly resilient to change when examined in a different time period in Chapter Four. Similar expectations were placed on Neil Kinnock on election night after his campaign performance in 1992. In other words, on the surface Clegg and Kinnock were seen to have performed well during their respective campaigns, but these performances were unlikely to change voters' long-term evaluations distinctively. Furthermore, it would be worthwhile examining whether Clegg's evaluations changed amongst voters who could have realistically been persuaded to vote Liberal Democrat in 2010. Establishing this baseline, as I did in Chapter Five for the 2015 and 2017 general elections, distinguishes between voters who are already largely sympathetic to the party and those that switch because their opinions changed during the campaign. Additionally, the failure of Jeremy Corbyn to replicate Labour's 2017 performance in 2019 serves as another leader worthy of further research. Investigating how voters' changed their evaluation of Jeremy Corbyn over the 2019 campaign and the effect of this change on vote choice would provide a significant point of comparison.

The third recommendation for future research relates to relative leader effects. Findings in this thesis have shown that voters evaluate leaders relatively to their alternatives. As a result, there may be past instances where successful leaders may not have been particularly

appealing but were considered the clear favourite amongst the main alternatives. Applying some of the analytical techniques in this thesis on historical data could investigate relative assessments of past leaders. For instance, Tony Blair's ratings stayed fairly high and were durable throughout his time in office, but he was competing against William Hague and Ian Duncan Smith for the majority of his time as Prime Minister. It raises the issue of whether Blair's high ratings were reliant on poor evaluations of his Conservative rivals. Furthermore, results indicated that leaders of smaller political parties, beyond the Conservatives and Labour, were important to voters' evaluations of party leaders. Therefore, third-party leaders may have been overlooked because of their importance in shaping how voters feel about the Conservative and Labour leaders. Perhaps these leaders are more important to the dynamics of voting during this period than previously thought. The appeal of Liberal, SDP, Alliance and Liberal Democrat leaders are consistently discussed in BBC election broadcasts since the 1970s. In particular, Jeremy Thorpe may have been more important to the Wilson-Heath dynamic than he is credited with. Thorpe received significant attention during both 1974 election broadcasts, where he is considered to have run a very successful campaign. Additionally, Paddy Ashdown could have been an important factor in the 1997 Labour landslide, helping facilitate the tactical voting that made the Labour landslide even larger.

The fourth recommendation is that future research on leadership effects could take advantage of methodological developments that are utilised here. Chapter Five details a machine learning approach, using a LASSO regression, to investigate campaign effects for the two largest parties in the UK. However, the performance of this model was significantly weaker when attempts were made to apply this model to smaller parties. Initial models were very good at predicting who will not vote for smaller parties but unsuccessful in predicting those who will. The effect of leadership evaluations on the Liberal Democrat, UKIP and SNP

vote would have been of particular interest. Future research could consider other classification techniques, such as random forests, which could potentially perform better with the smaller proportion of respondents who vote for these parties. The interpretation of these models is more difficult than the LASSO regression selected in this thesis, which share similarities with standard statistical techniques. Analysing the effect of leadership evaluations and estimating campaign effects of reinforcement, activation and conversion for these parties would have not only investigated whether leader effects were important in these parties but would have enabled a comparative analysis between the two main parties and smaller parties.

Fifth, analysis in this thesis has shown that election night broadcasts are a valuable source of data, which could be utilised by researchers. Election night transcripts provided a unique aspect to examine how leaders are used in explaining election outcomes and how this trend develops over time. In addition to the spoken discussion about party leaders, election night broadcasts use visual images, graphics and charts relating to party leaders to aid their explanations throughout the night. For instance, it would be worthwhile investigating whether images of leaders have replaced party symbols over subsequent broadcasts. In the 2019 BBC election night broadcast, images of Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn are front and centre in the coverage when the exit poll prediction is released. I considered this element somewhat because there is a natural link between the spoken discussion and visual images presented to viewers. However, concentrated investigation into the visual images of election broadcasts could add another layer of detail to the findings presented in this thesis.

Sixth, there are a number of terms discussed by researchers that require more careful consideration in future. 'Unsophisticated' voters are theorised as being more susceptible to leadership effects, but I find little evidence to support these claims after factoring in

measurements of political efficacy to my analysis. The term holds little value because it is interpreted in different waves by scholars, who use a range of variables in an attempt to capture 'sophistication'. Similarly, the terms 'floating' or 'swing' voters need careful caveats to be applied when discussing them in relation to campaign effects. As I demonstrate in the analysis there is a sizable number of these voters in the sample but voters who could be persuaded by Labour are distinctively different to those who could be persuaded by the Conservatives. Revised definitions of these terms, specifically about how these voters are theorised to respond to party leaders, would be a welcome addition.

My final suggestion relates to the significant opportunities that exist to analyse whether similar findings are found beyond the British context examined in this thesis. Much of the theoretical analysis about how voters evaluate leaders is based on a universal understanding of human psychology (Bittner 2014; Goffin and Olson 2011; Mughan 2015). Examinations of party leader effects in studies often include a comparative element, either in geographic region or between countries with similar political systems (Barisione 2009; Mughan 2015). Australia has been a frequent point of comparison with Britain for leadership effects because of the similarities between the political systems. However, Australian panel data that contains a similar number of waves to the BES is not yet available. While only a few countries' national election studies currently have longitudinal data sets available, panel data is becoming increasingly common as internet panels become established. The BES has certainly continued its focus on its internet panel and the latest iteration has nineteen waves. Future opportunities to study individual-level attitudes towards party leaders should only increase.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MjGo1Ms_9E
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Vms-_efQw4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbUWY8u1UJ8
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XANtqf9i6s4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeSUQOW65aQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKYxDAledew

BBC Election Coverage 2001 (Accessed 25/11/19)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HGDplurdMQ&t=1s

BBC Election Coverage 2005 (Accessed 25/11/19)
https://www.c-span.org/video/?186422-1/bbc-election-night-coverage

BBC Election Coverage 2010 (Accessed 25/11/19)
https://www.c-span.org/video/?293363-1/british-election-results-early-returns
https://www.c-span.org/video/?293363-101/british-election-results-continued-returns

Election 2015, 21:55 07/05/2015, BBC News 24, 545 mins.
https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0157D5BB (Accessed 02 Apr 2018)

Election 2017, 09:55 10/06/2017, BBC Parliament, 245 mins.
https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0F10BDA7 (Accessed 02 Apr 2018)

Election 2017, 14:00 10/06/2017, BBC Parliament, 270 mins.
https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0F11CB16 (Accessed 02 Apr 2018)

Research Methods Appendix

1.1 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis undertaken for this thesis utilises a range of methods to examine party leaders. All quantitative analysis was performed in *RStudio* and uses a range of 'packages' to develop and model statistical data. Advantages of using *R* in contrast to other statistical programs such as *SPSS* and *STATA* are numerous, and I outline three advantages here. Firstly, *R* is open source and free to any researcher (non-expert or otherwise) with an internet connection, with basic functions enhanced by additional packages. Development of packages can come from the organisation itself or the wider community of users. Furthermore, regular updates to the software and packages keep pace with methodological developments. Secondly, the software was not developed specifically for social scientists but for the wider research community of varying disciplines. The result is a flexible program that can handle large amounts of different types of data and objects in a single environment. Lastly, the visualisation of data in *R* is superior to other programs, providing researchers with tools to convey their results to a variety of audiences by customising the figures produced. All graphs are produced by the popular *ggplot2* package and model outputs are transformed into tables using *Stargazer* (Hlavac 2018). Throughout the thesis I chose the most appropriate statistical method for the area of research I was investigating. This means a range of statistical methods and models are used but were carefully selected based on the specifics of the hypotheses and the structure of available data. Throughout this thesis, I use descriptive statistics to provide an overview of the data before examining the results of more complex analysis. The descriptive statistics assist in understanding the structure of variables used in the analysis. In the remainder of this quantitative section, I provide a more detailed description of the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) data used in this thesis and then discuss each statistical method employed on this data.

1.2 Structure of British Election Study Internet Panel Data

Data used for quantitative analysis exclusively uses the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) waves one to thirteen. The panel begins in February 2014 and fieldwork for wave thirteen finished in June 2017 (British Election Study 2018). Each wave of the data has approximately 30,000 respondents but the number of respondents who complete each wave

of the survey totals 5,300 (17.5% of respondents who originally took wave one). The uniqueness of the BESIP panel cannot be overstated. Most national election studies do not have a panel element, and those that do, are often limited to three or four waves. Only the German Election Study is comparable in the number of respondents and waves available (German Longitudinal Election Study 2017). Weights are provided for each individual wave as a cross-sectional study, in addition to panel weights that cover the entire thirteen waves or a subset of waves. There are a number of panel weights for respondents that complete a variety of waves and all possible waves. For example, one of the panel weights I utilise covers respondents who completed surveys immediately before, during the campaign and after the 2015 General Election. The variety of weights available ensures that the largest sample of respondents are used in the analysis, whilst maintaining the representativeness of the data. For one point of cross-reference I use the 2005-2010 British Election Study panel which has similar characteristics but a fewer respondents and waves of the study.

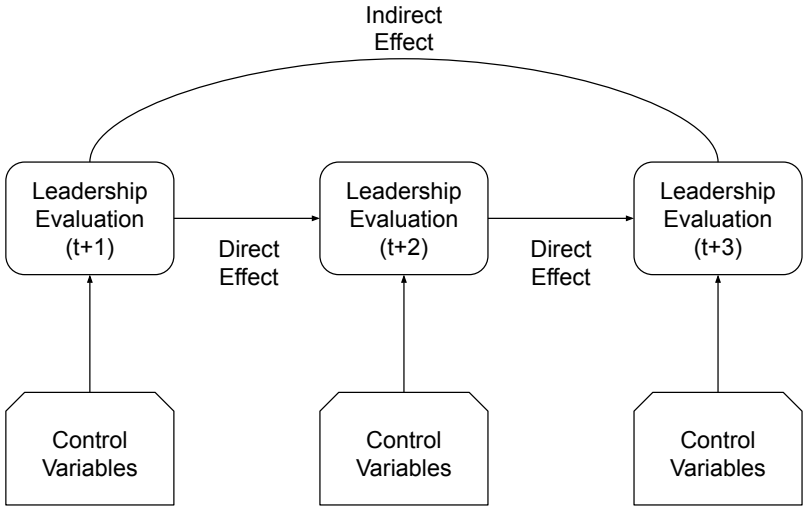
Respondents within this sample are not randomly selected. In order to be selected, respondents must be signed up to YouGov's access panel, which has over one million members (YouGov 2019). YouGov determines which individuals are sent the BES survey based on the information provided by the individual. This individual information is matched to population estimates with the purpose to achieve a representative sample. Not everyone in the UK population has a chance of being included in the online survey and those without internet access are automatically excluded (Fieldhouse and Prosser 2018). Nonprobability internet panels are known to differ from the underlying population researchers are attempting to examine (Hays, Liu, and Kapteyn 2015). Concern has been expressed about the usefulness of internet panels as Miller (2006) estimated that 30% of internet surveys are completed by 0.25% of the eligible population. Other researchers that conduct internet panels continue to randomly select respondents but individuals without internet access are provided with it by researchers for the purpose of completing the survey (Pollard and Mendelsohn 2016). This highlights how unrepresentative internet samples can be, though, there has been a rapid roll out of internet across the UK. The Office of National Statistics (2019) estimates that 93% of households in the UK have access to the internet, providing the opportunity for more people to participate in online studies. Due to the constraints of internet sampling, it is important that weights are applied to respondents before analysing results. Data gathered by internet panels can be extremely useful when analysing individual-

level change over time and does so in a cost effective way (Fieldhouse and Prosser 2018). Given that several hypotheses in this thesis examine individual level change, BESIP data is highly appropriate to use and facilitates the analysis of sub-groups through the large sample.

1.3 Path Models

During Chapter Four I use path models using the *Lavaan* (Latent Variable Analysis) package in R (Rosseel 2018). Path analysis is a type of structural equation model (SEM) originally developed for cross-sectional data but is adaptable for use on individual level data collected over time (Singer and Willett 2003). In Chapter Four path analysis is used to assess the stability of leader evaluations across the panel. Path models allow researchers to examine the effect of variables between discrete time periods, whilst also controlling for other variables. This technique is effective for examining the stability of individual leadership evaluations over time. Following this model enables researchers to calculate the indirect effects of variables in the model whilst controlling for confounding variables. Indirect effects are the effect of an independent variable (*x*), through a mediator variable (*m*), on the dependent variable (*y*). An example visualisation of how indirect and direct effects work is presented in Figure A1. Indirect effects are estimated by multiplying the coefficients between variables. Adding the indirect scores to the direct score creates the total effect. Calculating the indirect effects of leadership evaluations provides the option of evaluating the total effect of each variable and understanding the 'full' effect of variables from previous waves. Estimating the effects of each variable this way provides a more complete understanding of long-term effects from previous leadership evaluations. Indirect effects can only be calculated with a mediating variable included. Providing the total effect of coefficients provides a comprehensive analysis of the stability of leader evaluations across the panel.

Research Methods Appendix Figure A1: Visualisation of Indirect and Direct Effects in Path Models



In contrast to standard regression techniques, the order of the independent and dependent variables cannot be reversed because there is a temporal logic to their ordering. For example, in this study, it does not make sense for future leadership evaluations to predict previous leadership evaluations. Path models are commonly used in psychological studies to examine the indirect or mediated effects of particular variables on a dependent variable (Holahan and Holahan 1987; Marsh 1990; Streiner 2005). In election studies, investigations relating to political efficacy have employed path models. McPherson, Welch and Clark (1977) have used path analysis to test the stability of political efficacy responses between two waves of the American National Election Study. Additionally, Finkel (1985) uses path analysis to study the causal effects of political efficacy on political participation. Path models are a long-standing statistical technique and are effective in measuring the relationship between variables over time in a clear way.

1.4 Multilevel Models and Hierarchical Models

Multilevel models (MLMs) are used to provide a comprehensive model to analyse different levels of the data. A classic example of a data structure with multiple levels is medical data. Each patient (level one) is treated by a doctor (level two) who works within a hospital (level three). Failure to account for which doctor treated the patients or the specifics of the hospital may lead to misinterpretations of findings, where courses of treatment may differ

between each doctor or hospital. For this study, time and individual evaluations of leaders are treated as two different levels of the data. Leadership evaluations are made by respondents but each of these is nested within a discrete time frame, dictated by the fieldwork dates of the wave. Steele (2008) outlines that by viewing longitudinal data as a multilevel structure, researchers can take advantage of these advanced statistical methods in addressing research questions. MLMs are conventionally used to answer questions about within-person change at one level and between person change at a second level (Singer and Willett 2003). Employing a multilevel model on the BESIP data enables the analysis of wave level variables and individual level variables simultaneously for a comprehensive analytical model. MLMs have been used previously on BES panel data in studies that estimate how likely voters are to change vote choice over the electoral cycle (Ferrao Barbosa and Goldstein 2000; Yang, Goldstein, and Heath 2000). Furthermore, Andersen, Yang and Heath (2005) use MLMs to examine the effect of social class on vote choice at the individual-level, constituency-level and over time, concluding that the shrinking size of the working class has reduced the salience of social class in explaining voter behaviour. Critically, through using MLMs, researchers have the ability to 'combine multiple levels of analysis in a single comprehensive model' (Steenbergen and Jones 2002, 219). This was my objective in creating a single model that could examine each variable of interest.

It is particularly important to use multilevel models instead of conventional regression models with panel data because linear models assume that all observations are independent. Panel data, by its very design, has inter-dependent observations because it contains repeated measures from the same individuals (Bell and Jones 2015). Examining within person change over a turbulent period provides insights into how leader evaluations develop. To account for the interdependence of observations, random effects are introduced for each individual leading the model to assume a different intercept for each respondent. Standard errors will be incorrect if dependence between individual evaluations is not accounted for (Bell and Jones 2015; Persson 2012). MLMs deal with the hierarchical nature of data, enabling predictors at different levels in the analysis to be modelled correctly on the dependent variable (Johnston et al. 2005; Steenbergen and Jones 2002). Moreover, Collignon and Sajuria's (2018) study of regional identification and preference for local candidates illustrate how MLMs can test causality between the different levels of observed data. Though my analysis does not focus on interactions between different levels of the model, interactions

between individual-level variables are introduced to the model. Examining interaction effects provides an understanding of the conditionality of particular variables – in this case examining change in individual evaluations of different leaders.

MLM statistical analysis was completed in *RStudio* using the *lme4* (Bates et al. 2015) and *lmerTest* (Kuznetsova, Brockhoff, and Christensen 2017) packages. A separate MLM is constructed for change in evaluations of each main party leader. Following some initial diagnostic testing that indicated a non-normal distribution of residuals, a log-transformation of the variable was computed to satisfy this condition of linearity in the model. Residual plotting indicated a normal distribution following the transformation of the variable. Transforming the variable for party leader change also alters the interpretation of the model because the values are much lower than the 0-10 scale of the original variable. The logarithm of party leader change ranges from 0-2.38, so while in some circumstances the coefficients and intercepts appear small, this is a reflection of the new numeric range of the variable.

1.5 Machine Learning Approach

The predictive models in Chapter Five use machine learning (ML) methodology. Here I provide an overview of ML and describe how I utilise this approach. In addition to providing a robust process of prediction, ML methods can be used for investigating causal effects (Baćak and Kennedy 2019). While some critics have assumed machine-learning to involve computer algorithms working at random, this is far from the reality and require the expertise of researchers to construct successful models (Boelaert and Ollion 2018). Generally, the ML process can be understood in three steps: data input, abstraction and generalisation (Lantz 2015). The data input stage requires raw data, a range of observations and variables. Abstraction occurs when this raw data is summarised through a statistical technique, such as regression, random forest or K-nearest neighbour. The generalisation occurs through turning the abstracted knowledge to a wider action on new data. Many standard quantitative methods can be recognised within ML approaches but what differentiates ML is that a computer can 'learn' from an experience and utilize it (Boelaert and Ollion 2018; Lantz 2015).

It is important to remember that conventional statistical methods were designed during a time when researchers were limited by relatively small random samples of their population of interest. However, this situation contrasts to the current environment, where

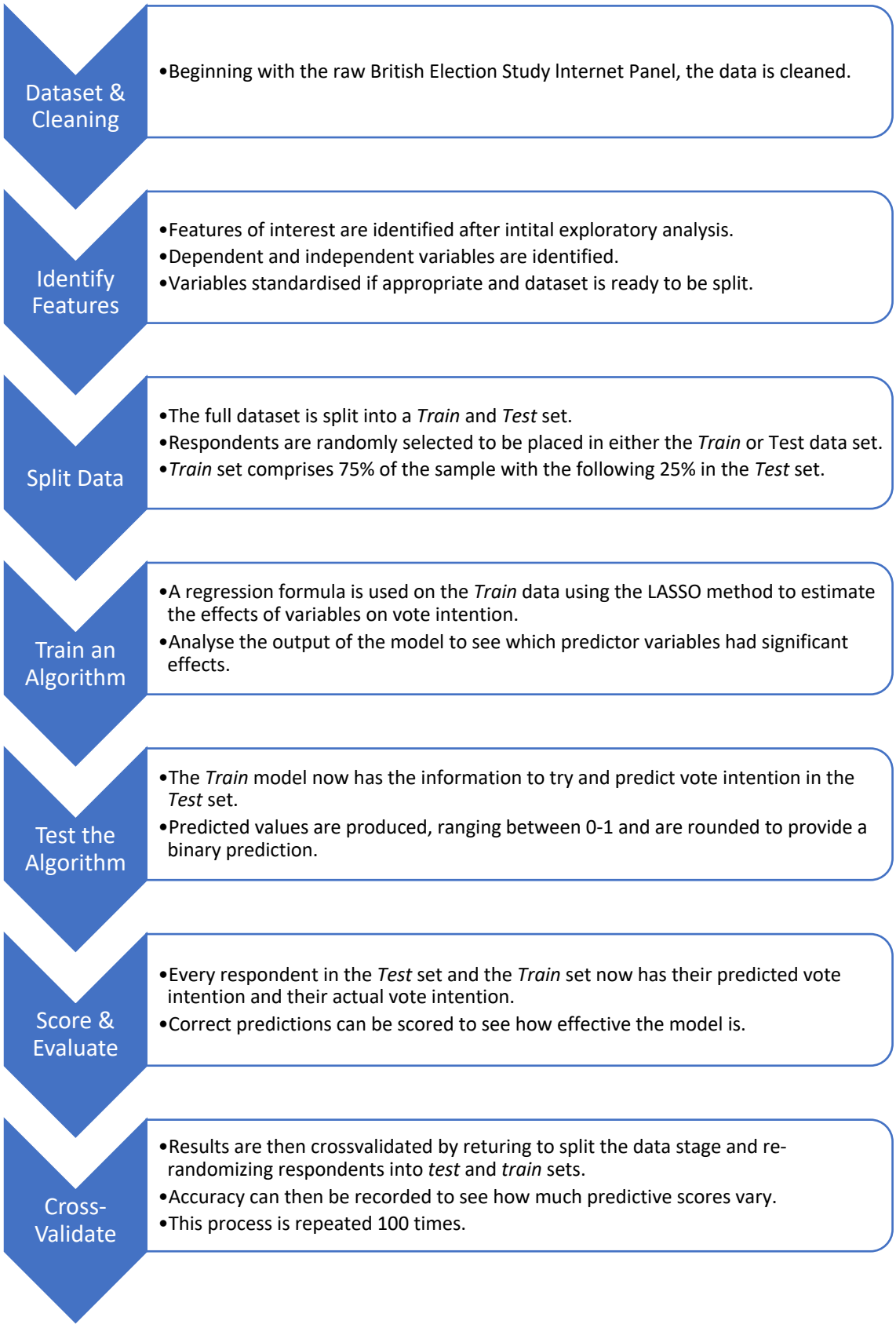
many researchers are 'drowning in the rising tide of large, non-random and dirty datasets' (Boelaert and Ollion 2018, 3–4). Some researchers continue to deal with small random samples, but the availability of quality data is no limitation to this thesis. With a large and representative sample, I split the original BESIP data set into a training set and a testing set. This is a key difference that separates conventional methods from ML methods, especially when dealing with regression models. Naturally, many researchers would be hesitant to split their data, especially if they are working with a small sample. However, Hindman (2015) suggests that applying ML techniques to smaller samples provide the biggest gains compared to datasets with millions of observations.

Machine learning has many benefits compared to conventional statistical techniques in the social sciences. By constructing the model on a separate sample of data and then applying it to previously unseen data, it ensures findings are generalisable beyond the observations that inform it and prevents models being overfitted to the available data (Hindman 2015). There are considerable opportunities to cross-validate the findings by randomizing different sections of the data and running the model again to assess the reliability of the findings. Cross-validation increases the reliability of findings by evaluating the variation between different iterations of the model. In addition, advocates of machine learning have pointed to 'super learner' or 'ensemble' approaches that combine a range of machine learning algorithms. These techniques involve taking several prediction methods based on the structure of the data and examining which has the highest performance (Baćak and Kennedy 2019). There is less emphasis on diagnostic values such as p-values, R^2, AIC & BIC as tests of reliability and the interpretation of coefficients. Instead the universal criterion for model quality is the accuracy of predictions. In other words, the better predictions from the model, the better the model.

The development and acceptance of ML methods within political science is still growing but similarities are found between ML and conventional methods, meaning they remain accessible to those who know little about the specific methodology. Figure A2 provides a 'walk through' of my ML approach with additional details at each stage. Firstly, I randomly split respondents in the sample into either being in the training set or the testing set. I construct a model of pre-campaign variables to predict reported vote intention after the campaign and apply this to the training set using LASSO regression (discussed below). The effects of variables in the model provide the information for making a prediction about how

an individual's vote choice in the test data, based on the individual's recorded responses for the same set of variables. These predicted values are then compared against the actual results for vote choice in the post-election wave to determine the accuracy of predictions. I randomise and repeat these steps a hundred times to cross-validate the findings between iterations. Coefficients are also examined at this stage to analyse the strength and direction of each variable in the model. More specific information relating to the data is reported within the chapter itself. ML analysis is conducted entirely in *R* using a variety of packages to model and analyse the data but primarily the *glmnet* (Friedman, Hastie, and Tibshirani 2010) and *tidyverse* packages. This approach provides several advantages but, most importantly, allows for hundreds of models to be run simultaneously in a single command and subsequently stored and analysed in a functional format.

Research Methods Appendix Figure A2: Machine Learning Flow Chart with Annotations



1.6 LASSO Regression

Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator (LASSO) regression is a form of penalised regression that is used to train the data in the machine learning process in Chapter Five. LASSO regression is similar to OLS regression in many regards, with additional constraints for model coefficients that assesses the importance of each variable (Tibshirani 1996). There are three advantages in using LASSO rather than standard regression approaches found in previous studies that study campaign effects and vote choice. Firstly, LASSO shrinks variables that have negligible effects to exactly to zero. Thus, these models avoid the pitfall of overfitting the model with variables that would have minimal or even no effect outside of the sample. Secondly, LASSO models produce parsimonious models. Constructing statistical models that are simple but explain the majority of variation in dependent variables and make accurate predictions. Thirdly, it avoids the 'pet variable problem' of researchers claiming their variable of interest is marginally statistically significant in one 'traditional' regression model. Due to the penalisation in the model and cross-validation process questionable 'pet variables' are likely to be eliminated (Andrews 2019). Greater focus is given to how additional variables add to the predictive accuracy of the model rather than explaining variation (Hindman 2015). Combined with machine learning, training and testing a LASSO regression model allows thorough cross-validation of the results and allows the model to be tested on data that were not involved when constructing the model. Again, this helps ensure that the model is not overfitted to the sample data. Methodological advantages, the availability of the data and the desire to make predictions about the data provide a comprehensive argument for using binomial LASSO regression in predicting vote choice and studying campaign effects.

1.7 Limitations of Quantitative Data

All data sources, particularly secondary sources, have limitations for researchers and the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) is no exception. Inconsistency in time between fieldwork dates provides a notable challenge for data analysis. This is particularly problematic when the research is focused on measuring change because the length of time may be influential in how much evaluations have changed. For example, fieldwork for some waves begins immediately after the last day of the previous wave, while in other cases there is an eleven-month gap before data for the next wave is collected (British Election Study

2018). Thus, the inconsistency in data gathering could influence the results and while the fieldwork dates cannot be changed it is important to be aware of the limitations they impose. The context of each wave is also an important consideration because this too could be influential in the extent to which opinions and evaluations change. As the British Election Study is a national election study, fieldwork mostly centred around significant electoral events. These electoral events are: the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, the 2015 UK General Election, the 2016 Devolved Elections, the 2016 EU Referendum and the 2017 UK General Election. Three separate waves were dedicated to the main national electoral events in this period: the 2015 General Election, the 2016 EU Referendum and the 2017 UK General Election. The context of each wave was another mitigating factor to consider during the analysis and this was investigated and modelled during Chapter Four.

Another challenge presented by using a secondary data source was the availability of relevant variables. As outlined in the methodology section of the thesis, the BESIP contains only one question included in all thirteen waves of the panel that asks respondents to explicitly evaluate leaders. Previous research has illustrated the effectiveness of this variable in capturing summaries of various leadership traits (Clarke et al. 2009a; Evans and Andersen 2005) but the absence of other questions limited my ability to analyse the specific traits of leaders in more detail. Most questions in the panel are not asked for all thirteen waves of the study, meaning that predictor variable selection was somewhat limited by missing data (British Election Study 2018). Where variables are not available for the full thirteen waves of the data and therefore cannot constitute a time-varying variable inputted into the model, I aggregate the available data to create time-constant variables. For example, measurements that capture whether voters find it difficult to understand are only available for seven waves of the data, so I calculate the mean figure for each individual. Though this is not ideal, it allows these variables to be included in analysis, and their effect to be considered. Using only time-varying analysis would have constrained the options for analysis. Missing data is a common challenge for researchers, but I have made every attempt to mitigate its negative effect where possible.

Using data with missing variables and where the question selection is outside the control of the researcher presents challenges but, ultimately, these challenges do not detract from the possibilities offered by this dataset. The availability of high-quality survey data cannot be understated for the possibility of this research to be undertaken. Sample sizes in

the British Election Study could not be replicated or furthered by the resources available to a doctoral student. The same would be true of any representative cross-sectional study, let alone a multi-wave longitudinal study. The ability to generalise findings to the wider population provides a specific incentive for using this British Election Study data. In short, British Election Study data is imperfect but through managing its limitations, it becomes a powerful resource which is utilised throughout this thesis.

2. Variable Selection and Manipulation

Variables were selected from the BESIP that were directly or indirectly related to the hypotheses outlined in the methodology. Each variable was cleaned to remove 'don't know' or NA responses and standardised where necessary. Some variables are long-standing inclusions in the BES questionnaire, such as questions about party identification. Others are more recent inclusions, such as whether respondents find it difficult to understand politics. A full list of the original variables used is available in section 2.1. As outlined above, other variables are missing from specific waves. In order to use variables central to hypothesis testing, a level of flexibility was required when using the data. New variables were also created from the information available. A full list of new variables is presented in 2.2. A substantial focus of this thesis is on individual-level change, meaning that additional variables needed to be calculated from the available variables and these are outlined in section 3.3.

2.1 List of BESIP explanatory variables used in Quantitative Analysis

Table 2A provides the variables that are used in this thesis and the original question asked in the British Election Study survey (British Election Study 2018). These variables are only cleaned or standardised when included in the analysis.

Research Methods Appendix Table 2A: Key Variables Used in Quantitative Models

Variable Name	Question
Leader Evaluation	How much do you like or dislike each of the following party leaders… (Scale 0-10)
Party Identification	Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?
Strength of Party Identification	Would you call yourself very strong, fairly strong, or not very strong *insert party*?
Level of Education	What is the highest educational or work-related qualification you have?
Vote intention (choice in post-election waves)	And if there were a UK General Election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?
Likelihood Party X will win in your constituency	How likely is it that each of these parties will win the General Election in your local constituency? (Scale 0-100)
Social Grade	NRS Social Grade (A, B, C1, C2, D, E)
Age	How old are you?

2.2 List of new variables created for Quantitative Analysis

Missing variables in the dataset created challenges but these were mediated through the creation of new variables that were incorporated into the analysis. Time-constant variables were created where there were missing variables for each wave. In addition, binary variables were created based on the wave information to capture the effects of particular types of wave. A list of the new variables created, along with a brief description is presented in Table 2B.

Research Methods Appendix Table 2B: New Variables Created for Statistical Analysis

Variable Name	Details
Leadership Change Wave	Binary variables used to test the effect of specific waves on change in leadership evaluations. The *ConservativeLeadershipChange* variable records Conservative and UKIP leadership change, wave ten is given a score of 1 with all other waves assigned a 0. *LabLeadershipChange* records Labour and Liberal Democrat leadership change as they occur in the same wave, which is wave seven and assigned a score of 1.
Campaign Wave	A binary variable used to indicate whether the wave takes place during a general election campaign. A score of 1 is given to waves five and twelve for the 2015 and 2017 general elections.
Change in Party Identification	This is another variable that records change in party identification between panel waves. This is a binary variable that records whether the respondent identifies with the same party as the previous wave. Responses coded as 1 indicate that the respondent has changed their party identification from the previous wave, with responses labelled as 0 describing no change in party identification.
Attention to Politics (General Knowledge)	Measures the number of correct answers for individual respondents when answering built-in general knowledge questions. Respondents are asked to match incumbents to their political position and are awarded a score of 1 point for correct answers. A total of nine questions are used, meaning that responses range from 0-9. This variable is time constant as these questions are not asked throughout the panel. Respondents match the following politicians: Angela Merkel, John Kerry, François Hollande, Vladimir Putin, Benjamin Netanyahu, John Bercow, Bashar al-Assad, Theresa May (when she is Home Secretary) and the respondent's local MP.
Political efficacy (median)	A time constant variable that measures the respondent's median response to the original question 'It is often difficult for me to understand what is going on in government and politics'. Responses range from 1-5 on a scale, from strongly disagree at 1 to strongly agree at 5. The median response of the respondent is taken from answers across the panel.
Average time-consuming political information via Television	Time-constant variable that records the respondent's most common response to using television as a source of political information. This variable uses the seven recorded responses in the panel to find the most common response. Responses remain on the same 1-5 scale that is found in the BESIP. With 1 - indicating that respondents don't watch political content on television. 2 - the respondent watched less than an hour. 3 - half an hour to one hour. 4 - one to two hours a day. 5 - indicates that they watched over two hours of political content on television a day.

Party Identification (Scale)	A new variable that combines party identification and strength of party identification. It is calculated for each party separately; Labour is used here as an example. The variable is scaled from -3 – 3. A value of positive three indicates a very strong Labour supporter. A value of minus three indicates a very strong supporter of any other political party. Those without party identification are placed at 0.

2.3 Calculating individual-level change

Changes in attitudes and evaluations between different waves of data collection are a substantial focus of this thesis. Often, focus is placed on change in evaluations of leaders and this is the dependent variable for Chapter Four, though change in other variables such as strength of party identification, is also calculated. To calculate change variables the following process was followed. Values for the previous wave were subtracted from the 'current' wave (i.e. W2 – W1) for each individual respondent in the sample. The result is a variable that can have both positive and negative values, reflecting the original range of values. This is what is referred to as a 'change' variable throughout the thesis. Change variables require two timepoints to be calculated, so are unavailable for the first wave of the panel. In some analyses where the direction of change is not of primary interest, but the magnitude of change is. Where it is desired absolute values of change variables are calculated, returning responses back to their original value range.

Change variables are calculated for the following leadership evaluations: Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and UKIP. New values range from -10 – 10. Two measures of change in party identification are used in this thesis. In Chapter Four, a simple binary variable is produced to measure whether a respondent changes their party identification from a categorical variable. A value of 1 indicates that the respondent has changed their party identification from the previous wave, with 0 describing no change in party identification. In Chapter Five, change in party identification is measured using the scaled variables described above. This change measure not only includes the party identification but also the strength

of party identification. A list of the new change variables created, along with a brief description is presented in Table 2C.

Research Methods Appendix Table 2C: New 'Change' Variables Created for Statistical Analysis

Variable Name	Details
Change in Leadership Evaluation	Changes in leadership evaluations are calculated for Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and UKIP leaders for each wave.
Change in Party Identification Scale	Changes to party identification (scale) are calculated for Labour and Conservative only. Changes potentially range from -6 – 6.
Change in Chance of 'Party X' winning in Respondents Constituency	Changes in chance of 'party x' winning the constituency are calculated for the Labour and Conservative parties. The original variable is scored on 0-100, meaning that the new variable has a potential range of -100 -100.

3.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data used in this thesis is a collection of BBC Election Night transcripts (ENTs) from 1955-2017. I compiled seventeen ENTs in total, every election since 1955, to investigate the changing role of party leaders at a macro-level. Though the first broadcast of British election results was transmitted for the 1951 UK General Election, no recordings have survived. Compiling textual data 'by hand' would be highly costly from either a monetary or time perspective. The ability to 'scrape' or 'mine' data from the internet is recognised in the social sciences as an effective tool for efficiently gathering substantial amounts of qualitative data. In the majority of cases in the social sciences this involves mining participant interactions on social media or public forums (Hewson and Stewart 2016). Previous studies, such as Wiedemann's (2016) study of democratic discourse in German Newspapers, have demonstrated the capabilities of data or text mining with other technological developments, such as machine-learning, analysing substantial amounts of qualitative data using a learnt algorithm. Moreover, data mined from twitter has become widely used in political science with some studies analysing over thirteen million tweets (Burnap et al. 2016; Fincham 2019). I use seventeen different transcripts, compiling a total of over 1.2 million words which enables research into an underutilised aspect of UK elections. As outlined in the literature review, election night coverage has been largely omitted from research due to a general

acknowledgement in the difficulties of compiling masses of data. While the ENTs are secondary data there is a notable level of originality in using this type and the quantity of data. Previous research using this type of data has restricted analysis to one or two elections or only using sections of the broadcast (Lauerbach 2013; Marriott 2000; Schieß 2007).

I utilised automatically generated transcripts from three sources to enable a long-term analysis of UK election coverage to analyse trends over a substantial period of time. Textual data was mined from *YouTube, C-Span* and *Box of Broadcasts*. YouTube broadcasts are uploaded by regular users with no transcript. YouTube technology generates transcripts of the majority of videos on its site through automatic-speech recognition technology, providing the user that uploaded the content has selected this option (YouTube 2018). Accessing the transcript of a particular YouTube video requires some searching around the YouTube interface but is a feature common to most videos. Numerous users have uploaded segments of election night coverage to YouTube, allowing textual data to be extracted and compiled into complete transcripts. The mined data collected did not create perfect transcripts as some videos did not contain a transcript or there were missing parts of the broadcast due to copyright issues. Soon after I had extracted transcripts, a user who had uploaded a number of election night broadcasts, deleted the uploads citing concerns over new copyright laws by the EU, but broadcasts could still be found on C-Span or Box of Broadcasts. Using this process to compile the transcripts provided the majority of data but led to noticeable amounts of omitted text. Smaller sections of missing data were transcribed manually by me, while two larger sections, totalling approximately five hours were professionally transcribed by 'Way With Words'. Transcripts of the 2015 and 2017 UK General Elections were taken from 'Box of Broadcasts' who compile the subtitles used in the broadcasts to produce full transcripts. Box of Broadcast transcripts had the advantage of already being compiled into a single section of text because these transcripts are compiled from the subtitles from their original broadcast. While Box of Broadcasts has a video library of all of the previous election broadcasts it only had transcripts for the recent 2015 and 2017 elections. C-Span was used for the 2005 transcript and had transcripts of similar quality to YouTube.

3.2 Qualitative Data Structure

While there have certainly been technological advancements in the time period covered, the structure of BBC election night broadcasts has remained broadly similar. Programmes have a small number of primary contributors in the BBC studio, a wider range of secondary reporters in various locations across the UK, with a variety of political figures interviewed for comment and initial analysis on individual results and overall results. There are two significant structural changes in the broadcasts over time. The most notable change is the attempt to predict the outcome of the election using survey data gathered during polling day. While these techniques have changed and developed in sophistication over subsequent years, the first proto-exit poll was carried out for the October 1974 election. In 1992 the BBC described the data collected as an exit poll for the first time. Exit polls have a considerable framing effect on the narrative during the coverage but have had varying degrees of accuracy (Wilks-Heeg and Andersen 2020).

The second notable change to the format of election night is the amount of coverage. In 2017 BBC coverage began at 9:55pm on June 7th and dedicated coverage to the election results continued well into the late morning and early afternoon of the 8th of June. This is a considerable increase from the three hours dedicated to the 1955 results. In other elections coverage stops at night and resumes in the morning. To counter differences in time of coverage I employ the "Dimbleby rule": the transcript ends when the original anchor, normally a Dimbleby, leaves the programme. David Dimbleby is a BBC journalist and broadcaster who has been the main presenter of every election night since 1979 and before this he was a constituency reporter. His father Richard Dimbleby also presented coverage of the election results during the 1960s, and as a consequence the name has almost become synonymous with election night programmes. The Dimbleby rule is designed to ensure a level of consistency between election nights that naturally vary in length. In recent elections, such as the 2015 and 2017 election, coverage essentially rolls into the morning news. The departure of the main anchor from the studio normally coincides neatly around 6am. In earlier elections where broadcasts end and resume with a morning section, only the over-night section data is collected. Differences in the length coverage are stark between the first and last elections, demonstrating the incremental change over time.

Despite these changes, there is substantial continuity between elections, with the format of each election broadcast being extremely similar to the one that precedes or

succeeds it. The anchor of the evening who ,as previously indicated is normally a Dimbleby, is accompanied by several broadcast journalists or political experts who provide analysis throughout the night. Academics are important contributors on election night. Professor David Butler was a long-term contributor to early election broadcasts (Crick 2018). More recently, Professor Sir John Curtice has achieved an elevated position during broadcasts and knighted in part for his work on the exit poll and explaining results to the public (BBC News 2017). A team of journalists are stationed at various politically significant counts such as marginal seats or 'early declarers'. The continuity of the structure of election night broadcasts are best personified by some of the features in the programme, such as the 'swingometer' and presence of either David or Richard Dimbleby at the helm of proceedings. The consistencies in the broadcasts enable a comparative analysis of trends relating to party leaders from 1955 to 2017.

3.3 Qualitative Data Limitations

There were numerous limitations and challenges with the collection of broadcast data and analysis. Firstly, while the raw textual data was relatively easy to gather using the various techniques outlined above, automated transcripts do not produce perfect replications of the data, but rather an excellent starting basis. Repeated inaccuracies in spelling and in word choice were common. Rapid speech, phonetic reduction and speaking style are all likely to affect the word error rates of automated systems of transcription (Novotney and Callison-Burch 2010). YouTube itself recognises the limitations with its automatically generated captions, which form the transcripts for videos. Sound quality, complexity of speech and language that the software does not recognise affect the accuracy of the transcript (YouTube 2018). As professional broadcast coverage, the sound quality is typically high quality, in contrast to many amateur videos that are uploaded to YouTube. Moreover, there is greater recognition that YouTube's auto-generated transcripts are improving in word accuracy through developing their acoustic models (Liao, McDermott, and Senior 2013).

Another difficulty arises because broadcasts are live and thus fairly unscripted. As a result, individuals often talk over each other, especially during heated debates between rival politicians. Automated transcription struggles to deal with this complication in the broadcast and this is reflected in the raw data with confusing phrasing and sentences. Cleaning the

textual data surrounding the discussion of party leaders was nonetheless a necessary step to ensure that analyses such as word frequencies produced valid results. Focusing on data relating to party leaders within the transcripts prevents the unnecessary and time-consuming task of cleaning the entirety of the dataset, considering the breath of the data and volume of words. To clean the transcripts, I watched each election night program to cross-validate the data and correct any mistakes in the transcript. This ensured perfect accuracy around sections of particular interest to ensure there is no misinterpretation in the findings and ensure that relevant sections were not overlooked. The first hour of each transcript is a complete verbatim copy of each broadcast to ensure accuracy when comparing between elections.

A further limitation of the automated speech technology used on YouTube is that it is not sophisticated enough to differentiate between different speakers. This limitation had the potential to cause some issues in correctly coding sections of the data by misidentifying participants in the coverage. More importantly, understanding which actors were speaking at what points was of central interest to the research. This limitation was addressed in two ways. First, as is convention in live news broadcasts, the guests and reporters are introduced by the presenters or reporters, giving some indication of who was speaking at what time, allowing the identification of individuals. Additionally, as transcripts were time stamped, cross-referencing with the original video was an easy task that eliminated uncertainty. Considering the low-cost of collection of these data and the research opportunities it facilitated, using imperfect but selectively cleaned transcripts was an inevitable compromise for the research.

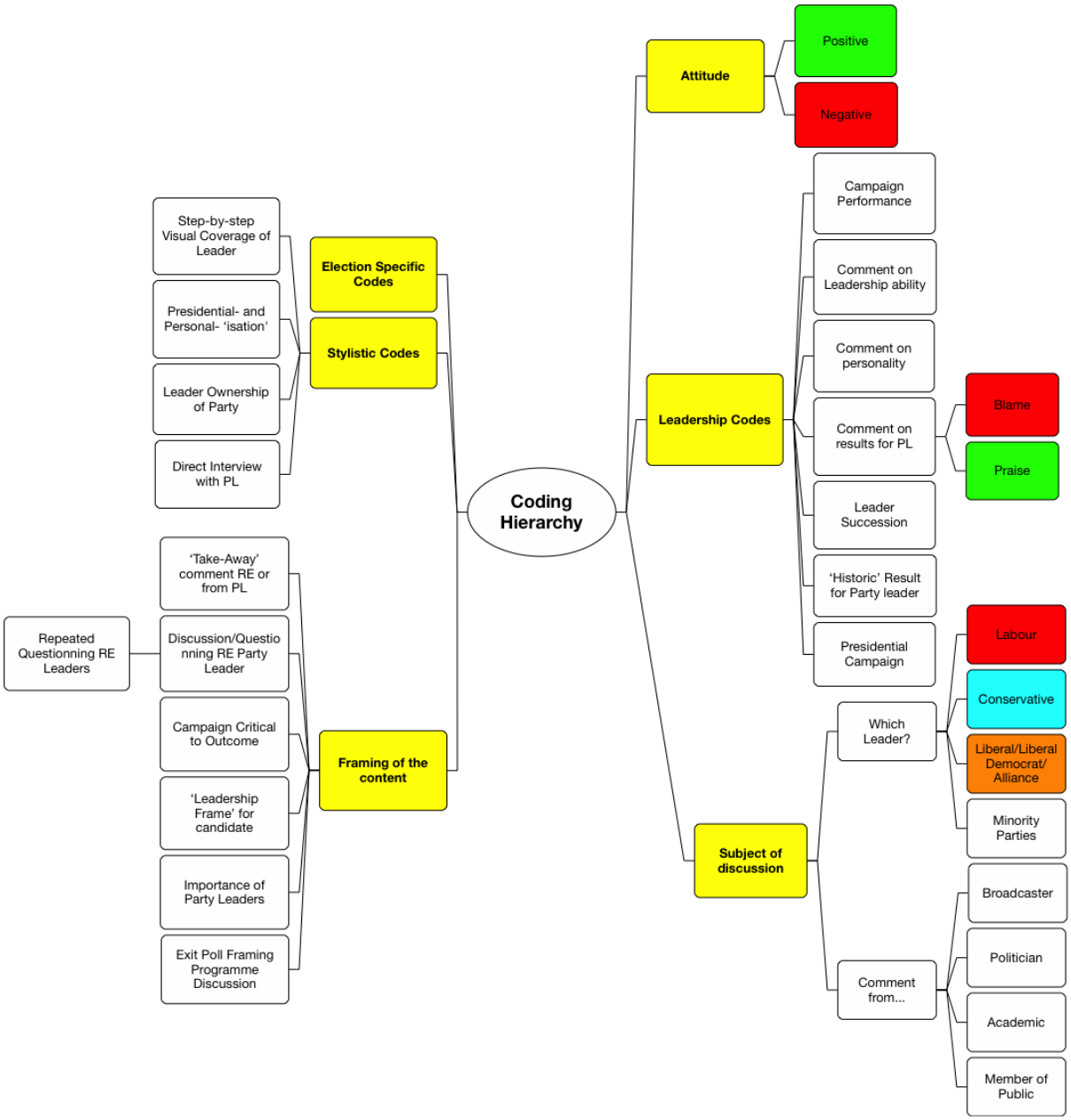
Through focusing the analysis on the audio section of broadcasts, there is little appreciation of the visual elements of election night which is an equally important aspect of the coverage. As there is at least some literature regarding the visual elements of UK election night (Marriott 2000; Schieß 2007) this study provides a textual analysis. The visual prominence of party leaders during election campaigns has been widely documented but no study has analysed how leaders are used by broadcasters in election night coverage. Ideally this research would have expanded to coverage from a range of broadcasters, considering that the BBC, ITV and Sky produce their own coverage. Comparing these programs at the same election and over time would have yielded interesting research data to provide triangulation of results between different data sources. To keep the research ambitious and realistic, only BBC coverage is analysed. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, the BBC have the longest running coverage of election night results since 1955, facilitating analysis over the

longest time period. ITV launched as a channel in 1955 and Sky News much more recently in 1989. Secondly, in pragmatic terms, BBC general election coverage is repeated on *BBC Parliament* providing myself with opportunities to check the transcripts against high-quality coverage that is uploaded to *BBC iPlayer*. Lastly, BBC coverage is also the most watched coverage in comparison to other broadcasters (Press Gazette 2017; The Guardian 2015). These reasons provide a clear justification for exclusively using BBC coverage but acknowledges potential benefits of including coverage from other broadcasters.

3.4 Coding Approach and Analysis

The findings presented in Chapter Six provide a thematic analysis of ENTs. To synthesise the substantial content and complexity of the ENTs coding the data was a necessary research tool (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). Codes were developed inductively by examining a subset of four transcripts (1959, October 1974, 1997 and 2017) to provide a preliminary understanding of the data and develop initial codes to analyse the remaining data. Following preliminary analysis, the first version of the coding hierarchy was created, with codes remaining fluid throughout analysis. The structure of the codes was re-developed as each transcript was analysed with the final structure outlined below in Figure C3.

Research Methods Appendix Figure C3: Coding Hierarchy

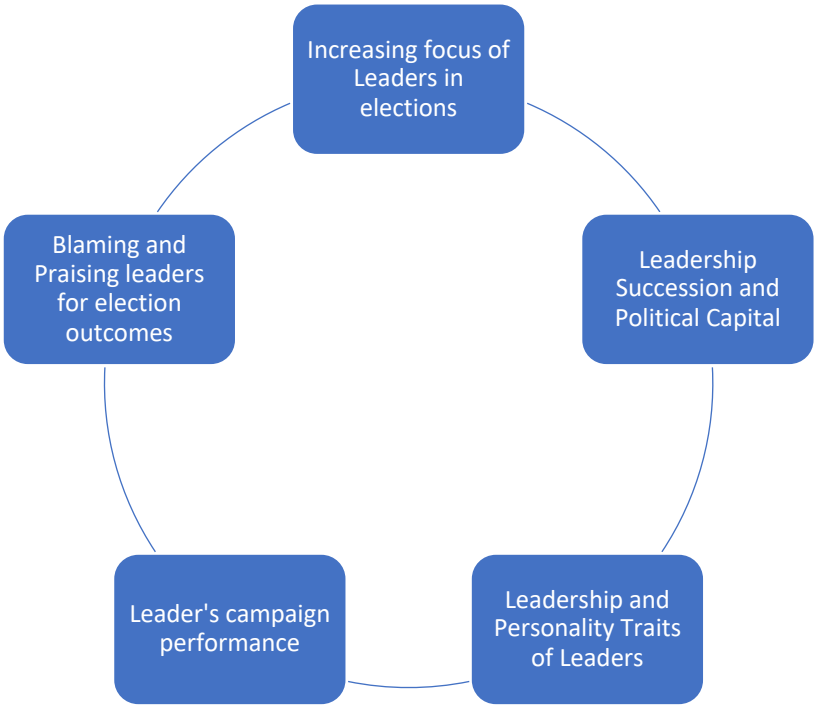


A combination of descriptive, attitudinal and explanative codes is used in the analysis. Sections of the data were coded simultaneously, meaning that several codes could apply to one section of text (Saldana 2012). This facilitated multileveled analysis of the data, necessary to investigate the hypothesis and sub-hypotheses of this thesis. Understanding which actors involved in election night was important to the research aims of the analysis. The coding hierarchy was refined several times throughout the process, a practise that is necessary to produce fully explanative codes (Bryman 2016). Rubin and Rubin (1995; 239) emphasise the importance of flexibility in the coding structure to ensure that data is not coerced into a rigid

coding system. Flexibility of coding is exemplified in Figure C3 with a group of election specific codes that relate to a specific issue or context relating to a single election. The final coding structure incorporates terminology from the existing literature on party leaders in the UK, to assist in bridging codes into themes and concepts. The final codebook above provides full details of each individual code. Below, Figure C4 displays the five main themes discussed in Chapter Six. Each of these themes was developed and abstracted from the various codes detailed above in Figure C3. Each of these themes directly address research questions and sub-hypotheses set out in the methodology section of the thesis, as is outlined in the main chapter. Here I provide some further details on how each theme was developed from each of the codes in the hierarchy.

The first theme, increasing focus on leaders in elections, is used to describe the fundamental change in how much attention broadcasters give to party leaders on election night. Examining the number of questions about party leaders and frequency of mentions of party leaders help provide a picture of the transition. Dividing the discussion amongst leaders of different political parties gives a greater understanding of whether victors or losers are given more attention, overall and in specific elections. The style and framing of these questions look to have changed dramatically over time. Leadership and personality traits are recorded when specific elements of leaders are mentioned. Furthermore, I examine if leaders' campaign performance is considered pivotal to the outcome of the election in modern broadcasts. The leadership succession and political capital theme is designed to capture data that relates election outcomes to the future. This can be both positive and negative but repeated questions about leadership succession often signify how broadcasters are ready to begin speculation on future leaders while the results are still coming in. On the other hand, results can bolster and provide authority to leaders whose parties have produced good performances. Blaming and praising leaders for election outcomes is a subtly different theme that looks for explicit or implicit attribution of the outcome to leaders. This is not done lightly by politicians or commentators but outlines the perception of how important leaders are to broadcasters.

Research Methods Appendix Figure C4: Summary of Themes for Chapter 6 of Election Night Broadcasts



Data coding and analysis was conducted in NVivo, a form of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). While some critics believe using computer assisted software leads to an overquantifying of qualitative data, the benefits of managing the substantial amounts of data, organising codes and analytical queries in a single computer interface were highly beneficial to this study (Bazeley and Jackson 2013; Spencer et al. 2014). Documents, codes, memos and query results are all stored in relevant folders and subfolders, making switching between different aspects of the data easy. Silverman (2010) outlines the importance of the research convincing the reader that the themes identified in the findings are based on the entirety of the data. Presenting and visualising the thematic analysis is challenging but software can assist with this (Silverman 2014). In addition to descriptive statistics, NVivo can produce coding matrices to give concise overviews of coded data across multiple data sources, avoiding some of the generic frailties in qualitative research. NVivo provides tools to search data or run 'queries' where codes overlap, providing insights into the relationship between codes within the dataset (Saldana 2012). Retrieving data coded across seventeen transcripts that are coded by specified criteria into a results section demonstrates the capabilities of NVivo, an arduous task without the software.

Following the completion of coding the data, codes were abstracted into broader substantive themes. Thematically analysing the data was considered most appropriate to evaluate and identify macro-level trends within the data. The purpose of thematic analysis is to present and interpret sequences with the data, providing fundamental meaning of the data (Spencer et al. 2014). Furthermore, as the ENTs continue to have the same function, follow a similar format and are produced by the same television broadcasting company, analysing patterns across transcripts is an appropriate and achievable goal. The aim of the research, to analyse the discussion and presence of party leaders in election night broadcasts, naturally lends itself to a thematic approach. Thematic analysis is achieved through a reflective coding process that links codes together and constructs them into wider themes (Punch 2013). Criticism is levelled at researchers that fail to explicitly demonstrate how themes were identified from the data (Bryman 2016). The comprehensiveness of the coding structure with different levels of codes provides sufficient evidence for how themes were developed from the data. Additionally, it is important to recognise that this approach does not attempt to code the data in its entirety. Saldana (2012, 16) recognises that the majority of researchers, particularly those using secondary data, focus on the most salient portions of the data for 'intensive data analysis.' As a result, data coding and analysis broadly centres on text relating to or involving party leaders in some description. Given the enormity of data there was ample justification for focusing on sections relating to party leaders.

3.5 Election Night Broadcast Codebook

This section provides description of each individual code used to analyse BBC election night transcripts. As outlined above, the objective was to organise a substantial amount of textual data to gather insight from this original dataset. Here I make a purposeful distinction between analytical codes and descriptive codes that are layered to provide a richer analysis of the data. For example, 'positive', 'competency' and 'Conservative leader' provide a greater level of information, providing a context to which leaders are being evaluated by broadcasters and the type of comment that is being made. Codes are split into the following six areas: Election Specific Codes, Stylistic Codes, Framing of Discussion/content, Subject of Discussion, Leadership Codes and Attitude. Naturally, there are some parts of discussion that do not comfortably fit into any of the codes or are particularly noteworthy. In this instance an annotation is created, which can also be succinctly organised.

Election Specific Codes

Election specific codes are inductive codes developed when analysing a specific transcript. They relate to the unique events or contexts. These specific codes contain important information regarding the discussion of leadership and how analysis of party leaders is being framed by broadcasters.

2017: May's Personal decision to call a General Election

This code is used in relation to comments or discussion regarding Theresa May's personal decision to consult parliament and call an early general election. Discussion includes how the decision backfired substantially, she personally risked the small but stable majority and the understanding Theresa May needed her own personal mandate as Prime Minister. The emphasis on the election being solely her decision is notable.

1992: The Enduring influence of Margaret Thatcher

In the 1992 election transcript, the thoughts and comments of Margaret Thatcher are referenced substantially more than any other previous party leader. The broadcasters make a point to discuss her reaction to the incoming results as it becomes clearer and clearer that the Conservatives have won the election. Additionally, Thatcher is more than happy to give her opinion to journalists.

Stylistic Codes

Stylistic codes are designed to capture changes in how party leaders, their role in the electoral process and their importance is presented and discussed. These codes attempt to establish whether discussion surrounding the electoral process has become more "presidentialised". The codes are less focused on the specific comments of the broadcasters, concentrating on the language used by the broadcasters when discussing party leaders.

"Presidentialisation" of Discussion

The Presidentialisation code can be used in several instances when discussing the purpose or the outcome of the election. One example is when broadcasters use the name of Party leader interchangeably with the party itself, effectively portraying them to be the same. Similarly, this code is also used for when party leaders are discussed but under a parliamentary system the use of a party would be more appropriate. For example, 'John
Major over Neil Kinnock in the popular vote'.

Step-by-step visual coverage of Leader

This code is used when there is commentary regarding the movements of party leaders at various locations throughout election night. The data recorded by the code is often not very interesting in itself. However, the fact that the broadcasters clearly think it is important to follow the party leaders in such detail, especially when they offer no comment to journalists on election night.

Leader 'Ownership' of Party

This code records when leaders are understood as "owning" the political party that they lead. For example, Mrs May's Conservative party. This gives some understanding on how the broadcasters frame the importance of part leaders and their control on the party they lead.

Direct Interview with Party Leader

This code identifies where there has been a direct interview with a party leader. The absence of this code from transcripts is as important as is presence. It provides a clear understanding of which party leaders of which parties engage with the media during election night.

The Framing of Discussion and Content

The following codes are important in understanding how the discussion of party leaders is produced by broadcasters. A range of codes are included in this section to analyse the importance of various components of the electoral system. These include broadcaster

questioning/discussion of the performance of party leaders, the campaign being critical to the outcome, perceived importance of the party leaders to deciding elections.

The importance of Party Leaders

Text that relates to the perceived importance of party leaders and their role in general election campaigns and beyond in the campaign. This includes comments regarding which locations the party leaders have been visiting in an attempt to increase the vote in various constituencies.

Exit Poll Framing Discussion

Exit polls have a substantial effect on the election night discussion and how the performance of party leaders is framed. Depending on the closeness of the exit poll, there is an effect on the assessment of leadership performance in the transcript, as clear assessments from broadcasters are only given once there is an indication of a clear result. For example, in 1992, there was difficulty at the start of the night in understanding how John Major and Neil Kinnock performed.

Campaign Critical to the Election Outcome

This code is used to gather evidence from politicians and commentators that the election campaign was critical to the outcome and results of the election. It collects comments that regard decisions and events during the campaign as critical and effecting the voters party choice. The importance of this code is in relation to party leaders spearheading their party's campaign.

Broadcaster discussion or questioning about Party Leaders

Broadcasters and interviewers discuss the performance of party leaders, asking politicians from various parties if they believe their leader performed well throughout the campaign, whether they have been in contact with their party leader and asking members of the panel (broadcasters & journalists) about the performance of party leaders.

Repeated Questioning about Party Leaders

Continual questioning to an interviewee on the future of a party leader, whether they will need to resign, if they can continue as leader, why their performance was so good or so poor. This code is a succession from the preceding code.

'Take away' comment about Party Leader

Comment from a politician taken from a previous interview regarding the leader of a political party is repeated by the broadcaster at a later stage or discussed by the panel following the

interview. This comment is deemed to be the most salient from the interview with the broadcasters, although a range of comments are usually made.

Candidate Introduced in a Leadership Frame

Candidates are sometimes introduced with a 'leadership frame', especially if they have made a memorable or noticeable comment about the leadership and/or are a backbencher. For example, supporting John Major's leadership during his challenge from Redwood or being a prominent critic of Jeremy Corbyn.

Leadership Codes

The following codes capture text relating to comment, analysis and description of leadership qualities. They are designed to understand the evaluations of party leaders during election night. The codes in this section are: competency, personality, leadership succession, outcome of election caused by party leader (blame & praise), campaign performance and presidential campaign.

Presidential Campaign

This code is applicable to the data in two scenarios. First, when there is a clear focus that the leaders of a political party have been overwhelmingly at the forefront of their party's election campaign. Secondly, when there is an understanding that the valence factor of leadership has been campaigned on by one or both major parties.

Personality

Comments relating to the features of a party leaders personality. For example, being honourable, caring, trustworthy. This code is usually used in conjunction with positive and negative codes to fully understand the assessment made.

Competency

Comments or mentions about a party leader's leadership ability under the umbrella term of 'competency'. For example, being 'Prime Ministerial', decisive, experienced, 'statesmanlike'. All of these examples can be treated as negatively or positively, as this code is almost always used in combination with positive and negative codes to fully understand the assessment made.

Campaign Performance

Any text that relates to an assessment or comment regarding the campaign performance, skills of campaigning, speaking, campaign strategy of a party leader. Again, this code is layered

alongside positive and negative codes to provide a more detailed overview of what this code is describing.

Leader Succession

Comment or discussion on how the results will affect the stability of the leader's position at the head of their party. This includes speculation if they survive a leadership challenge or will resign following the outcome of an election? In contrast, this code can be used in a positive manner too as the election results could be important in securing the internal position of a leader within their party.

Outcome of election attributed to Party Leader

The outcome of the election in terms of winning seats is attributed to a party leader in some way. Either through their campaign performance, competency, campaign strategy and so forth. There is a personal attribution, focus on the individuals. This code is separated into praise and blame, dependent on whether the party has had positive or negative results.

Attitude Codes

These descriptive codes are designed to be layered onto the analytical codes to provide a more detailed understanding of how each code is used. The positive and negative codes also stop the replication of several codes dependent on how they are used or framed in the text. For example, there is no separation between competent and incompetent code as the attitude codes are layered on top to provide this context.

Positive

A layering code designed to give a description of whether an analytical code is used positively. Additionally, in comparison to the negative codes, it can provide an interesting overview of the predominant attitudes.

Negative

A layering code designed to give a description of whether an analytical code is used negatively. Additionally, in comparison to the positive codes, it can provide an interesting overview of the predominant attitudes.

Subject of discussion

The following codes are descriptive, designed to be used in conjunction with analytical themes to identify when the leaders of different political parties are being discussed. These

codes facilitate effective comparison between the leaders of different parties, providing clarity about which party leaders are being discussed and in what regard. Additionally, they provide information about who is making the comments regarding party leaders.

Party Leaders

This group of descriptive codes relate to various leaders of political parties.

Conservative Leader

This code is used to identify text that is related to the leader of the Conservative Party. Conservative leaders are separated into different codes in NVIVO, this allows comparison between elections. If a leader contests more than one election, they are separated into separate codes.

Labour Leader

This code is used to identify text that is related to the leader of the Labour Party. Party leaders are separated into different codes in NVIVO, this allows comparison between elections. If a leader contests more than one election, they are separated into separate codes.

Secondary Conservative and Labour Party Leaders

This group of codes are reserved for secondary party leaders post the devolution settlement. For example, the Scottish Conservative leader or Welsh Labour leader. This code is designed to acknowledge if they have grown in salience across recent UK general elections.

Liberal Democrat/Liberal/SDP Alliance leaders

This code is used to identify text that is related to the leader(s) of the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party or Liberal/SDP Alliance. Party leaders are separated into different codes in NVIVO, this allows comparison between elections. If a leader contests more than one election, they are separated into separate codes.

Minority Party Leaders

This code is used to identify areas of text that relate to leaders of the following parties: UKIP, SNP, Green Party, Plaid Cymru, Northern Irish Parties. If a leader contests more than one election, they are separated into separate codes.

Comment From…

This group of specific codes is used to identify which actors are making the comments towards or about party leaders. It aims to understand whether politicians or broadcasters are driving the conversation towards party leaders.

Broadcaster(s)

A broadcaster has made a judgement about the performance of a party leader, their character or competence etc.

Politician

A politician has made a judgement about the performance of a party leader, their character or competence etc.

Academic

An academic has made a judgement about the performance of a party leader, their character or competence etc.

Member of public

A member of the public has made a judgement about the performance of a party leader, their character or competence etc.

Model Output Appendix

Model Output Appendix Table 1: Conservative 'Typical' Path Model Output

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeConLeaderW4				0.040	0.124	0.319	0.749
2	likeConLeaderW4	~	likeConLeaderW3	a1	0.381	0.033	11.503	0
3	likeConLeaderW4	~	likeLabLeaderW4		0.020	0.012	1.746	0.081
4	likeConLeaderW4	~	AgeW1		0.003	0.003	1.145	0.252
5	likeConLeaderW4	~	PID4Conservative		0.785	0.107	7.303	0
6	likeConLeaderW4	~	likeConLeaderW2	b	0.294	0.034	8.700	0
7	likeConLeaderW4	~	likeConLeaderW1	b2	0.237	0.037	6.407	0
8	likeConLeaderW3				0.172	0.072	2.373	0.018
9	likeConLeaderW3	~	likeConLeaderW2	a2	0.487	0.031	15.734	0
10	likeConLeaderW3	~	likeLabLeaderW3		0.051	0.013	3.834	0.0001
11	likeConLeaderW3	~	PID3Conservative		0.523	0.111	4.695	0.00000
12	likeConLeaderW3	~	likeConLeaderW1		0.410	0.032	12.895	0
13	likeConLeaderW2				0.834	0.083	10.089	0
14	likeConLeaderW2	~	likeConLeaderW1	a3	0.770	0.017	44.877	0
15	likeConLeaderW2	~	PID1Conservative		0.763	0.123	6.228	0
16	likeConLeaderW2	~	likeLabLeaderW1		-0.059	0.013	-4.435	0.00001
17	likeConLeaderW4	~~	likeConLeaderW4		1.795	0.107	16.835	0
18	likeConLeaderW3	~~	likeConLeaderW3		1.887	0.095	19.764	0
19	likeConLeaderW2	~~	likeConLeaderW2		2.317	0.117	19.752	0
20	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeLabLeaderW4		8.299	0		
21	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	AgeW1		-3.377	0		
22	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	PID4Conservative		-0.436	0		
23	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeConLeaderW1		-2.126	0		
24	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeLabLeaderW3		6.460	0		
25	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	PID3Conservative		-0.444	0		
26	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	PID1Conservative		-0.426	0		
27	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		6.361	0		
28	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		238.733	0		
29	AgeW1	~~	PID4Conservative		1.099	0		
30	AgeW1	~~	likeConLeaderW1		3.988	0		
31	AgeW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW3		-3.071	0		
32	AgeW1	~~	PID3Conservative		1.084	0		
33	AgeW1	~~	PID1Conservative		1.054	0		
34	AgeW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		-2.721	0		
35	PID4Conservative	~~	PID4Conservative		0.198	0		
36	PID4Conservative	~~	likeConLeaderW1		0.738	0		
37	PID4Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW3		-0.377	0		
38	PID4Conservative	~~	PID3Conservative		0.163	0		
39	PID4Conservative	~~	PID1Conservative		0.160	0		
40	PID4Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		-0.399	0		
41	likeConLeaderW1	~~	likeConLeaderW1		9.181	0		
42	likeConLeaderW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW3		-1.756	0		
43	likeConLeaderW1	~~	PID3Conservative		0.803	0		
44	likeConLeaderW1	~~	PID1Conservative		0.832	0		

45	likeConLeaderW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		-1.346	0		
46	likeLabLeaderW3	~~	likeLabLeaderW3		7.727	0		
47	likeLabLeaderW3	~~	PID3Conservative		-0.384	0		
48	likeLabLeaderW3	~~	PID1Conservative		-0.378	0		
49	likeLabLeaderW3	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		6.056	0		
50	PID3Conservative	~~	PID3Conservative		0.197	0		
51	PID3Conservative	~~	PID1Conservative		0.168	0		
52	PID3Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		-0.400	0		
53	PID1Conservative	~~	PID1Conservative		0.198	0		
54	PID1Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		-0.378	0		
55	likeLabLeaderW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		7.544	0		
56	likeLabLeaderW4				3.239	0		
57	AgeW1				33.971	0		
58	PID4Conservative				0.271	0		
59	likeConLeaderW1				3.578	0		
60	likeLabLeaderW3				3.136	0		
61	PID3Conservative				0.271	0		
62	PID1Conservative				0.273	0		
63	likeLabLeaderW1				3.288	0		
64	IndirecteffectW2onW4	:=	a1* a2	IndirecteffectW2onW4	0.186	0.022	8.635	0
65	TotaldirecteffectW2onW4	:=	b+(a1* a2)	TotaldirecteffectW2onW4	0.479	0.032	14.774	0
66	IndirecteffectW1onW4	:=	(a1* a2* a3)	IndirecteffectW1onW4	0.143	0.017	8.500	0
67	totaleffectW1onW4	:=	b2+(a1* a2* a3)	totaleffectW1onW4	0.380	0.035	10.948	0
68	likeConLeaderW4	r2	likeConLeaderW4		0.817			
69	likeConLeaderW3	r2	likeConLeaderW3		0.797			
70	likeConLeaderW2	r2	likeConLeaderW2		0.744			

Model Output Appendix Table 2: Conservative 'Transition' Path Model

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeConLeaderW10				1.747	0.185	9.427	0
2	likeConLeaderW10	~	likeConLeaderW9	a1	0.174	0.037	4.747	0.00000
3	likeConLeaderW10	~	likeLabLeaderW10		-0.087	0.019	-4.540	0.00001
4	likeConLeaderW10	~	PID10Conservative		1.021	0.139	7.349	0
5	likeConLeaderW10	~	AgeW1		0.032	0.004	8.251	0
6	likeConLeaderW10	~	likeConLeaderW8	b1	0.074	0.040	1.860	0.063
7	likeConLeaderW10	~	likeConLeaderW7	c1	0.295	0.042	6.946	0
8	likeConLeaderW9				0.373	0.130	2.863	0.004
9	likeConLeaderW9	~	likeConLeaderW8	a2	0.537	0.035	15.246	0
10	likeConLeaderW9	~	PID9Conservative		0.639	0.158	4.047	0.0001
11	likeConLeaderW9	~	AgeW1		0.0001	0.003	0.022	0.982
12	likeConLeaderW9	~	likeLabLeaderW9		0.052	0.014	3.800	0.0001
13	likeConLeaderW9	~	likeConLeaderW7	b2	0.355	0.042	8.492	0
14	likeConLeaderW8				0.216	0.135	1.601	0.109
15	likeConLeaderW8	~	likeConLeaderW7	a3	0.870	0.013	68.820	0
16	likeConLeaderW8	~	AgeW1		-0.002	0.003	-0.799	0.424
17	likeConLeaderW8	~	PID8Conservative		0.389	0.094	4.131	0.00004
18	likeConLeaderW8	~	likeLabLeaderW8		0.035	0.012	2.910	0.004
19	likeConLeaderW10	~~	likeConLeaderW10		4.767	0.148	32.175	0
20	likeConLeaderW9	~~	likeConLeaderW9		2.452	0.154	15.949	0
21	likeConLeaderW8	~~	likeConLeaderW8		1.753	0.076	22.931	0
22	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	likeLabLeaderW10		9.536	0		
23	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	PID10Conservative		-0.499	0		
24	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	AgeW1		-7.836	0		
25	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	likeConLeaderW7		-2.646	0		
26	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	PID9Conservative		-0.480	0		
27	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	likeLabLeaderW9		7.461	0		
28	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	PID8Conservative		-0.481	0		
29	likeLabLeaderW10	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		7.754	0		
30	PID10Conservative	~~	PID10Conservative		0.207	0		
31	PID10Conservative	~~	AgeW1		1.188	0		
32	PID10Conservative	~~	likeConLeaderW7		0.825	0		
33	PID10Conservative	~~	PID9Conservative		0.175	0		
34	PID10Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW9		-0.465	0		
35	PID10Conservative	~~	PID8Conservative		0.170	0		
36	PID10Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		-0.548	0		
37	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		231.164	0		
38	AgeW1	~~	likeConLeaderW7		4.757	0		
39	AgeW1	~~	PID9Conservative		1.204	0		
40	AgeW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW9		-7.728	0		
41	AgeW1	~~	PID8Conservative		1.048	0		
42	AgeW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		-7.755	0		
43	likeConLeaderW7	~~	likeConLeaderW7		9.294	0		
44	likeConLeaderW7	~~	PID9Conservative		0.803	0		
45	likeConLeaderW7	~~	likeLabLeaderW9		-2.495	0		
46	likeConLeaderW7	~~	PID8Conservative		0.790	0		

47	likeConLeaderW7	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		-2.923	0		
48	PID9Conservative	~~	PID9Conservative		0.202	0		
49	PID9Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW9		-0.441	0		
50	PID9Conservative	~~	PID8Conservative		0.172	0		
51	PID9Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		-0.513	0		
52	likeLabLeaderW9	~~	likeLabLeaderW9		8.759	0		
53	likeLabLeaderW9	~~	PID8Conservative		-0.438	0		
54	likeLabLeaderW9	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		7.598	0		
55	PID8Conservative	~~	PID8Conservative		0.201	0		
56	PID8Conservative	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		-0.525	0		
57	likeLabLeaderW8	~~	likeLabLeaderW8		9.490	0		
58	likeLabLeaderW10				3.172	0		
59	PID10Conservative				0.293	0		
60	AgeW1				34.603	0		
61	likeConLeaderW7				3.508	0		
62	PID9Conservative				0.280	0		
63	likeLabLeaderW9				3.133	0		
64	PID8Conservative				0.279	0		
65	likeLabLeaderW8				3.508	0		
66	indirecteffectW8onW10	:=	a1* a2	indirecteffectW8onW10	0.093	0.020	4.565	0.00000
67	totaleffectW8onW10	:=	b1+(a1* a2)	totaleffectW8onW10	0.167	0.036	4.594	0.00000
68	indirecteffectW7onW10	:=	(a1* a2* a3)	indirecteffectW7onW10	0.081	0.018	4.546	0.00001
69	totaleffectW7onW10	:=	c1+indirecteffectW7onW10	totaleffectW7onW10	0.376	0.039	9.548	0
70	likeConLeaderW10	r2	likeConLeaderW10		0.490			
71	likeConLeaderW9	r2	likeConLeaderW9		0.759			
72	likeConLeaderW8	r2	likeConLeaderW8		0.809			

Model Output Appendix Table 3: Labour 'Typical' Model Output

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeLabLeaderW4				0.291	0.157	1.859	0.063
2	likeLabLeaderW4	~	likeLabLeaderW3	a1	0.340	0.033	10.289	0
3	likeLabLeaderW4	~	likeConLeaderW4		0.010	0.011	0.923	0.356
4	likeLabLeaderW4	~	PID4Labour		0.596	0.104	5.707	0
5	likeLabLeaderW4	~	AgeW1		-0.003	0.003	-1.089	0.276
6	likeLabLeaderW4	~	likeLabLeaderW2	b	0.260	0.031	8.293	0
7	likeLabLeaderW4	~	likeLabLeaderW1	b2	0.306	0.034	8.997	0
8	likeLabLeaderW3				0.159	0.144	1.106	0.269
9	likeLabLeaderW3	~	likeLabLeaderW2	a2	0.453	0.029	15.505	0
10	likeLabLeaderW3	~	likeConLeaderW3		0.055	0.012	4.789	0.00000
11	likeLabLeaderW3	~	PID3Labour		0.859	0.129	6.680	0
12	likeLabLeaderW3	~	AgeW1		-0.002	0.002	-0.881	0.378
13	likeLabLeaderW3	~	likeLabLeaderW1		0.374	0.030	12.331	0
14	likeLabLeaderW2				0.780	0.144	5.400	0.00000
15	likeLabLeaderW2	~	likeLabLeaderW1	a3	0.715	0.019	38.566	0
16	likeLabLeaderW2	~	PID2Labour		1.233	0.112	11.052	0
17	likeLabLeaderW2	~	likeConLeaderW2		0.039	0.015	2.701	0.007
18	likeLabLeaderW2	~	AgeW1		-0.009	0.003	-3.172	0.002
19	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeLabLeaderW4		2.072	0.104	19.987	0
20	likeLabLeaderW3	~~	likeLabLeaderW3		2.070	0.114	18.199	0
21	likeLabLeaderW2	~~	likeLabLeaderW2		2.418	0.126	19.199	0
22	likeConLeaderW4	~~	likeConLeaderW4		9.882	0		
23	likeConLeaderW4	~~	PID4Labour		-0.488	0		
24	likeConLeaderW4	~~	AgeW1		4.833	0		
25	likeConLeaderW4	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		-2.133	0		
26	likeConLeaderW4	~~	likeConLeaderW3		8.317	0		
27	likeConLeaderW4	~~	PID3Labour		-0.490	0		
28	likeConLeaderW4	~~	PID2Labour		-0.503	0		
29	likeConLeaderW4	~~	likeConLeaderW2		8.088	0		
30	PID4Labour	~~	PID4Labour		0.196	0		
31	PID4Labour	~~	AgeW1		0.249	0		
32	PID4Labour	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		0.654	0		
33	PID4Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW3		-0.441	0		
34	PID4Labour	~~	PID3Labour		0.161	0		
35	PID4Labour	~~	PID2Labour		0.163	0		
36	PID4Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW2		-0.440	0		
37	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		240.014	0		
38	AgeW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		-2.877	0		
39	AgeW1	~~	likeConLeaderW3		3.159	0		
40	AgeW1	~~	PID3Labour		-0.047	0		
41	AgeW1	~~	PID2Labour		-0.032	0		
42	AgeW1	~~	likeConLeaderW2		3.842	0		
43	likeLabLeaderW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW1		7.560	0		
44	likeLabLeaderW1	~~	likeConLeaderW3		-1.805	0		
45	likeLabLeaderW1	~~	PID3Labour		0.674	0		
46	likeLabLeaderW1	~~	PID2Labour		0.671	0		

47	likeLabLeaderW1	~~	likeConLeaderW2		-1.766	0		
48	likeConLeaderW3	~~	likeConLeaderW3		9.327	0		
49	likeConLeaderW3	~~	PID3Labour		-0.436	0		
50	likeConLeaderW3	~~	PID2Labour		-0.458	0		
51	likeConLeaderW3	~~	likeConLeaderW2		7.923	0		
52	PID3Labour	~~	PID3Labour		0.195	0		
53	PID3Labour	~~	PID2Labour		0.168	0		
54	PID3Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW2		-0.431	0		
55	PID2Labour	~~	PID2Labour		0.196	0		
56	PID2Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW2		-0.461	0		
57	likeConLeaderW2	~~	likeConLeaderW2		9.035	0		
58	likeConLeaderW4				3.745	0		
59	PID4Labour				0.267	0		
60	AgeW1				49.939	0		
61	likeLabLeaderW1				3.284	0		
62	likeConLeaderW3				3.702	0		
63	PID3Labour				0.265	0		
64	PID2Labour				0.268	0		
65	likeConLeaderW2				3.610	0		
66	IndirectW2onW4	:=	a1* a2	IndirectW2onW4	0.154	0.018	8.560	0
67	TotalW2onW4	:=	b+(a1* a2)	TotalW2onW4	0.414	0.029	14.169	0
68	indirectW1onW4	:=	a1* a2* a3	indirectW1onW4	0.110	0.013	8.720	0
69	TotalW1onW4	:=	b2+(a1* a2* a3)	TotalW1onW4	0.416	0.031	13.561	0
70	likeLabLeaderW4	r2	likeLabLeaderW4		0.751			
71	likeLabLeaderW3	r2	likeLabLeaderW3		0.733			
72	likeLabLeaderW2	r2	likeLabLeaderW2		0.685			

Model Output Appendix Table 4: Labour 'Transition' Model Output

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeLabLeaderW7				2.229	0.289	7.720	0
2	likeLabLeaderW7	~	likeLabLeaderW6	a	0.223	0.050	4.494	0.00001
3	likeLabLeaderW7	~	likeConLeaderW7		-0.056	0.026	-2.184	0.029
4	likeLabLeaderW7	~	AgeW1		-0.016	0.005	-3.292	0.001
5	likeLabLeaderW7	~	PID7Labour		1.194	0.176	6.789	0
6	likeLabLeaderW7	~	likeLabLeaderW5	b	0.197	0.042	4.629	0.00000
7	likeLabLeaderW7	~	likeLabLeaderW4	b2	0.167	0.047	3.522	0.0004
8	likeLabLeaderW6				0.901	0.256	3.521	0.0004
9	likeLabLeaderW6	~	likeLabLeaderW5	a2	0.483	0.031	15.545	0
10	likeLabLeaderW6	~	PID6Labour		0.648	0.179	3.619	0.0003
11	likeLabLeaderW6	~	likeConLeaderW6		-0.003	0.013	-0.205	0.838
12	likeLabLeaderW6	~	AgeW1		-0.010	0.004	-2.590	0.010
13	likeLabLeaderW6	~	likeLabLeaderW4		0.327	0.038	8.695	0
14	likeLabLeaderW5				0.849	0.176	4.836	0.00000
15	likeLabLeaderW5	~	likeLabLeaderW4	a3	0.822	0.018	46.414	0
16	likeLabLeaderW5	~	likeConLeaderW5		-0.021	0.012	-1.787	0.074
17	likeLabLeaderW5	~	AgeW1		-0.003	0.003	-0.940	0.347
18	likeLabLeaderW5	~	PID4Labour		0.823	0.122	6.728	0
19	likeLabLeaderW7	~~	likeLabLeaderW7		5.183	0.234	22.159	0
20	likeLabLeaderW6	~~	likeLabLeaderW6		2.266	0.124	18.271	0
21	likeLabLeaderW5	~~	likeLabLeaderW5		2.371	0.106	22.317	0
22	likeConLeaderW7	~~	likeConLeaderW7		9.267	0		
23	likeConLeaderW7	~~	AgeW1		4.570	0		
24	likeConLeaderW7	~~	PID7Labour		-0.447	0		
25	likeConLeaderW7	~~	likeLabLeaderW4		-2.090	0		
26	likeConLeaderW7	~~	PID6Labour		-0.487	0		
27	likeConLeaderW7	~~	likeConLeaderW6		8.406	0		
28	likeConLeaderW7	~~	likeConLeaderW5		8.163	0		
29	likeConLeaderW7	~~	PID4Labour		-0.425	0		
30	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		241.822	0		
31	AgeW1	~~	PID7Labour		0.088	0		
32	AgeW1	~~	likeLabLeaderW4		-3.818	0		
33	AgeW1	~~	PID6Labour		-0.130	0		
34	AgeW1	~~	likeConLeaderW6		5.672	0		
35	AgeW1	~~	likeConLeaderW5		4.929	0		
36	AgeW1	~~	PID4Labour		0.331	0		
37	PID7Labour	~~	PID7Labour		0.192	0		
38	PID7Labour	~~	likeLabLeaderW4		0.673	0		
39	PID7Labour	~~	PID6Labour		0.154	0		
40	PID7Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW6		-0.593	0		
41	PID7Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW5		-0.559	0		
42	PID7Labour	~~	PID4Labour		0.158	0		
43	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeLabLeaderW4		8.320	0		
44	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	PID6Labour		0.687	0		
45	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeConLeaderW6		-3.155	0		
46	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	likeConLeaderW5		-2.790	0		

47	likeLabLeaderW4	~~	PID4Labour		0.694	0		
48	PID6Labour	~~	PID6Labour		0.203	0		
49	PID6Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW6		-0.656	0		
50	PID6Labour	~~	likeConLeaderW5		-0.616	0		
51	PID6Labour	~~	PID4Labour		0.158	0		
52	likeConLeaderW6	~~	likeConLeaderW6		11.299	0		
53	likeConLeaderW6	~~	likeConLeaderW5		10.000	0		
54	likeConLeaderW6	~~	PID4Labour		-0.591	0		
55	likeConLeaderW5	~~	likeConLeaderW5		10.739	0		
56	likeConLeaderW5	~~	PID4Labour		-0.564	0		
57	PID4Labour	~~	PID4Labour		0.197	0		
58	likeConLeaderW7				3.498	0		
59	AgeW1				50.099	0		
60	PID7Labour				0.259	0		
61	likeLabLeaderW4				3.312	0		
62	PID6Labour				0.282	0		
63	likeConLeaderW6				4.176	0		
64	likeConLeaderW5				4.126	0		
65	PID4Labour				0.270	0		
66	indirectW5onW7	:=	a* a2	indirectW5onW7	0.108	0.027	3.941	0.0001
67	TotalW5onW7	:=	b+(a* a2)	TotalW5onW7	0.304	0.042	7.265	0
68	indrectW4onW7	:=	(a* a2* a3)	indrectW4onW7	0.089	0.023	3.914	0.0001
69	TotalW4onW7	:=	b2+(indrectW4onW7)	TotalW4onW7	0.256	0.041	6.286	0
70	likeLabLeaderW7	r2	likeLabLeaderW7		0.451			
71	likeLabLeaderW6	r2	likeLabLeaderW6		0.736			
72	likeLabLeaderW5	r2	likeLabLeaderW5		0.742			

Model Output Appendix Table 5: Liberal Democrat 'Typical' Path Model

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeLibDemLeaderW4				0.324	0.162	2.000	0.046
2	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~	likeLibDemLeaderW3	a	0.356	0.028	12.581	0
3	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~	likeUKIPLeaderW4		0.044	0.010	4.233	0.00002
4	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~	AgeW1		-0.001	0.003	-0.263	0.793
5	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.431	0.127	3.397	0.001
6	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~	likeLibDemLeaderW2	b	0.288	0.031	9.370	0
7	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~	likeLibDemLeaderW1	b2	0.268	0.032	8.331	0
8	likeLibDemLeaderW3				0.347	0.165	2.098	0.036
9	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~	likeLibDemLeaderW2	a2	0.480	0.030	15.871	0
10	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~	likeUKIPLeaderW3		0.033	0.012	2.712	0.007
11	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~	AgeW1		-0.002	0.003	-0.805	0.421
12	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~	PID3LiberalDemocrat		0.391	0.123	3.182	0.001
13	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~	likeLibDemLeaderW1		0.390	0.030	13.143	0
14	likeLibDemLeaderW2				1.102	0.165	6.662	0
15	likeLibDemLeaderW2	~	likeLibDemLeaderW1	a3	0.773	0.016	47.665	0
16	likeLibDemLeaderW2	~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		0.467	0.128	3.655	0.0003
17	likeLibDemLeaderW2	~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		-0.044	0.015	-2.892	0.004
18	likeLibDemLeaderW2	~	AgeW1		-0.007	0.003	-2.346	0.019
19	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		2.004	0.091	21.945	0
20	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW3		2.033	0.101	20.080	0
21	likeLibDemLeaderW2	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		2.521	0.128	19.640	0
22	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW4		9.738	0		
23	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	AgeW1		3.610	0		
24	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		-0.078	0		
25	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW1		-0.066	0		
26	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW3		8.039	0		
27	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	PID3LiberalDemocrat		-0.074	0		
28	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		-0.067	0		
29	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		6.314	0		
30	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		237.768	0		
31	AgeW1	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.163	0		
32	AgeW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW1		-1.711	0		
33	AgeW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW3		5.494	0		
34	AgeW1	~~	PID3LiberalDemocrat		0.139	0		
35	AgeW1	~~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		0.169	0		
36	AgeW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		5.520	0		
37	PID4LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.053	0		
38	PID4LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW1		0.128	0		
39	PID4LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW3		-0.071	0		
40	PID4LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID3LiberalDemocrat		0.037	0		
41	PID4LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		0.034	0		
42	PID4LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		-0.049	0		
43	likeLibDemLeaderW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW1		6.042	0		
44	likeLibDemLeaderW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW3		0.249	0		
45	likeLibDemLeaderW1	~~	PID3LiberalDemocrat		0.148	0		
46	likeLibDemLeaderW1	~~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		0.162	0		

47	likeLibDemLeaderW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		0.887	0		
48	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW3		9.821	0		
49	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~~	PID3LiberalDemocrat		-0.064	0		
50	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		-0.064	0		
51	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		6.980	0		
52	PID3LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID3LiberalDemocrat		0.048	0		
53	PID3LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		0.036	0		
54	PID3LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		-0.037	0		
55	PID1LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID1LiberalDemocrat		0.051	0		
56	PID1LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		-0.030	0		
57	likeUKIPLeaderW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		8.416	0		
58	likeUKIPLeaderW4				3.141	0		
59	AgeW1				50.418	0		
60	PID4LiberalDemocrat				0.056	0		
61	likeLibDemLeaderW1				2.779	0		
62	likeUKIPLeaderW3				3.348	0		
63	PID3LiberalDemocrat				0.051	0		
64	PID1LiberalDemocrat				0.054	0		
65	likeUKIPLeaderW1				3.130	0		
66	IndirectW2onW4	:=	a* a2	IndirectW2onW4	0.171	0.018	9.560	0
67	TotalW2onW4	:=	b+(a* a2)	TotalW2onW4	0.459	0.031	14.963	0
68	IndirectW1onW4	:=	(a* a2* a3)	IndirectW1onW4	0.132	0.014	9.573	0
69	TotalW1onW4	:=	b2+(IndirectW1onW4)	TotalW1onW4	0.400	0.030	13.558	0
70	likeLibDemLeaderW4	r2	likeLibDemLeaderW4		0.691			
71	likeLibDemLeaderW3	r2	likeLibDemLeaderW3		0.677			
72	likeLibDemLeaderW2	r2	likeLibDemLeaderW2		0.597			

Model Output Appendix Table 6: Liberal Democrat 'Transition' Path Model

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeLibDemLeaderW7				1.970	0.356	5.528	0.00000
2	likeLibDemLeaderW7	~	likeLibDemLeaderW6	a	0.135	0.041	3.298	0.001
3	likeLibDemLeaderW7	~	likeUKIPLeaderW7		0.076	0.029	2.583	0.010
4	likeLibDemLeaderW7	~	AgeW1		-0.006	0.006	-0.974	0.330
5	likeLibDemLeaderW7	~	PID7LiberalDemocrat		1.152	0.196	5.876	0
6	likeLibDemLeaderW7	~	likeLibDemLeaderW5	b	0.167	0.039	4.287	0.00002
7	likeLibDemLeaderW7	~	likeLibDemLeaderW4	b2	0.178	0.043	4.115	0.00004
8	likeLibDemLeaderW6				0.779	0.200	3.890	0.0001
9	likeLibDemLeaderW6	~	likeLibDemLeaderW5	a2	0.526	0.031	16.770	0
10	likeLibDemLeaderW6	~	AgeW1		-0.007	0.004	-1.838	0.066
11	likeLibDemLeaderW6	~	likeUKIPLeaderW6		0.069	0.012	5.614	0.00000
12	likeLibDemLeaderW6	~	PID6LiberalDemocrat		0.698	0.139	5.012	0.00000
13	likeLibDemLeaderW6	~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		0.376	0.035	10.851	0
14	likeLibDemLeaderW5				0.714	0.188	3.791	0.0002
15	likeLibDemLeaderW5	~	likeLibDemLeaderW4	a3	0.812	0.017	46.648	0
16	likeLibDemLeaderW5	~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		0.060	0.015	4.003	0.0001
17	likeLibDemLeaderW5	~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.796	0.146	5.446	0.00000
18	likeLibDemLeaderW5	~	AgeW1		0.001	0.003	0.172	0.863
19	likeLibDemLeaderW7	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW7		4.073	0.259	15.716	0
20	likeLibDemLeaderW6	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW6		2.529	0.127	19.874	0
21	likeLibDemLeaderW5	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW5		2.700	0.150	18.024	0
22	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW7		10.287	0		
23	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	AgeW1		3.716	0		
24	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	PID7LiberalDemocrat		-0.114	0		
25	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		-0.136	0		
26	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW6		8.372	0		
27	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	PID6LiberalDemocrat		-0.103	0		
28	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		8.354	0		
29	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		-0.086	0		
30	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		241.558	0		
31	AgeW1	~~	PID7LiberalDemocrat		0.120	0		
32	AgeW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		-1.978	0		
33	AgeW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW6		3.663	0		
34	AgeW1	~~	PID6LiberalDemocrat		0.122	0		
35	AgeW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		4.658	0		
36	AgeW1	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.199	0		
37	PID7LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID7LiberalDemocrat		0.064	0		
38	PID7LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		0.177	0		
39	PID7LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW6		-0.114	0		
40	PID7LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID6LiberalDemocrat		0.049	0		
41	PID7LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		-0.110	0		
42	PID7LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.039	0		
43	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		6.933	0		
44	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW6		-0.394	0		
45	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	PID6LiberalDemocrat		0.203	0		
46	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		-0.174	0		

47	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.152	0		
48	likeUKIPLeaderW6	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW6		10.667	0		
49	likeUKIPLeaderW6	~~	PID6LiberalDemocrat		-0.103	0		
50	likeUKIPLeaderW6	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		9.031	0		
51	likeUKIPLeaderW6	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		-0.100	0		
52	PID6LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID6LiberalDemocrat		0.065	0		
53	PID6LiberalDemocrat	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		-0.092	0		
54	PID6LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.042	0		
55	likeUKIPLeaderW5	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW5		10.440	0		
56	likeUKIPLeaderW5	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		-0.094	0		
57	PID4LiberalDemocrat	~~	PID4LiberalDemocrat		0.060	0		
58	likeUKIPLeaderW7				3.389	0		
59	AgeW1				51.278	0		
60	PID7LiberalDemocrat				0.069	0		
61	likeLibDemLeaderW4				2.974	0		
62	likeUKIPLeaderW6				3.522	0		
63	PID6LiberalDemocrat				0.070	0		
64	likeUKIPLeaderW5				3.318	0		
65	PID4LiberalDemocrat				0.064	0		
66	IndirectW5onW7	:=	a* a2	IndirectW5onW7	0.071	0.022	3.242	0.001
67	TotalW5onW7	:=	b+(a* a2)	TotalW5onW7	0.238	0.036	6.574	0
68	IndirectW4onW7	:=	(a* a2* a3)	IndirectW4onW7	0.058	0.018	3.207	0.001
69	TotalW4onW7	:=	b2+(IndirectW4onW7)	TotalW4onW7	0.235	0.038	6.124	0
70	likeLibDemLeaderW7	r2	likeLibDemLeaderW7		0.310			
71	likeLibDemLeaderW6	r2	likeLibDemLeaderW6		0.691			
72	likeLibDemLeaderW5	r2	likeLibDemLeaderW5		0.641			

Model Output Appendix Table 7: UKIP 'Typical' Path Model

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeUKIPLeaderW4				0.177	0.121	1.471	0.141
2	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~	likeUKIPLeaderW3	a	0.474	0.030	15.837	0
3	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		0.044	0.014	3.050	0.002
4	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~	AgeW1		-0.004	0.003	-1.321	0.187
5	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~	PID4UKIP		1.339	0.322	4.165	0.00003
6	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~	likeUKIPLeaderW2	b	0.329	0.031	10.564	0
7	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~	likeUKIPLeaderW1	b2	0.056	0.027	2.101	0.036
8	likeUKIPLeaderW3				-0.008	0.106	-0.077	0.938
9	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~	likeUKIPLeaderW2	a2	0.578	0.025	23.533	0
10	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~	likeLibDemLeaderW3		0.051	0.014	3.549	0.0004
11	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~	AgeW1		0.004	0.003	1.291	0.197
12	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~	PID3UKIP		0.854	0.219	3.904	0.0001
13	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		0.322	0.027	11.746	0
14	likeUKIPLeaderW2				0.664	0.137	4.851	0.00000
15	likeUKIPLeaderW2	~	likeUKIPLeaderW1	a3	0.760	0.018	43.334	0
16	likeUKIPLeaderW2	~	PID2UKIP		1.673	0.212	7.894	0
17	likeUKIPLeaderW2	~	AgeW1		0.007	0.003	1.959	0.050
18	likeUKIPLeaderW2	~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		0.001	0.019	0.048	0.962
19	likeUKIPLeaderW4	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW4		2.622	0.145	18.093	0
20	likeUKIPLeaderW3	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW3		2.536	0.117	21.706	0
21	likeUKIPLeaderW2	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW2		4.038	0.170	23.729	0
22	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW4		6.468	0		
23	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	AgeW1		-2.150	0		
24	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	PID4UKIP		-0.094	0		
25	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		0.315	0		
26	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW3		4.944	0		
27	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	PID3UKIP		-0.117	0		
28	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	PID2UKIP		-0.119	0		
29	likeLibDemLeaderW4	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		4.841	0		
30	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		238.614	0		
31	AgeW1	~~	PID4UKIP		0.052	0		
32	AgeW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		5.290	0		
33	AgeW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW3		-2.426	0		
34	AgeW1	~~	PID3UKIP		0.159	0		
35	AgeW1	~~	PID2UKIP		-0.197	0		
36	AgeW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		-3.190	0		
37	PID4UKIP	~~	PID4UKIP		0.059	0		
38	PID4UKIP	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		0.205	0		
39	PID4UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW3		-0.078	0		
40	PID4UKIP	~~	PID3UKIP		0.043	0		
41	PID4UKIP	~~	PID2UKIP		0.041	0		
42	PID4UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		-0.056	0		

43	likeUKIPLeaderW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW1		8.457	0		
44	likeUKIPLeaderW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW3		0.367	0		
45	likeUKIPLeaderW1	~~	PID3UKIP		0.265	0		
46	likeUKIPLeaderW1	~~	PID2UKIP		0.261	0		
47	likeUKIPLeaderW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		0.247	0		
48	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW3		6.296	0		
49	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~~	PID3UKIP		-0.109	0		
50	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~~	PID2UKIP		-0.119	0		
51	likeLibDemLeaderW3	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		4.904	0		
52	PID3UKIP	~~	PID3UKIP		0.076	0		
53	PID3UKIP	~~	PID2UKIP		0.053	0		
54	PID3UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		-0.103	0		
55	PID2UKIP	~~	PID2UKIP		0.087	0		
56	PID2UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		-0.092	0		
57	likeLibDemLeaderW2	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW2		6.255	0		
58	likeLibDemLeaderW4				2.976	0		
59	AgeW1				34.319	0		
60	PID4UKIP				0.064	0		
61	likeUKIPLeaderW1				3.137	0		
62	likeLibDemLeaderW3				2.768	0		
63	PID3UKIP				0.083	0		
64	PID2UKIP				0.096	0		
65	likeLibDemLeaderW2				2.767	0		
66	IndirectW2onW4	:=	a* a2	IndirectW2onW4	0.274	0.021	13.132	0
67	TotalW2onW4	:=	b+(a* a2)	TotalW2onW4	0.603	0.026	23.147	0
68	IndirectW1onW4	:=	(a* a2* a3)	IndirectW1onW4	0.208	0.016	12.913	0
69	TotalW1onW4	:=	b2+(IndirectW1onW4)	TotalW1onW4	0.264	0.026	9.977	0
70	likeUKIPLeaderW4	r2	likeUKIPLeaderW4		0.730			
71	likeUKIPLeaderW3	r2	likeUKIPLeaderW3		0.742			
72	likeUKIPLeaderW2	r2	likeUKIPLeaderW2		0.592			

Model Output Appendix Table 8: UKIP 'Transition' Path Model

	lhs	op	rhs	label	est	se	z	pvalue
1	likeUKIPLeaderW10				0.153	0.217	0.708	0.479
2	likeUKIPLeaderW10	~	likeUKIPLeaderW9	a	0.353	0.053	6.710	0
3	likeUKIPLeaderW10	~	likeLibDemLeaderW10		0.060	0.022	2.659	0.008
4	likeUKIPLeaderW10	~	AgeW1		0.012	0.005	2.337	0.019
5	likeUKIPLeaderW10	~	PID10UKIP		0.103	0.426	0.242	0.808
6	likeUKIPLeaderW10	~	likeUKIPLeaderW8	b	0.118	0.056	2.102	0.036
7	likeUKIPLeaderW10	~	likeUKIPLeaderW7	b2	0.192	0.052	3.700	0.0002
8	likeUKIPLeaderW9				-0.106	0.175	-0.604	0.546
9	likeUKIPLeaderW9	~	likeUKIPLeaderW8	a2	0.575	0.050	11.393	0
10	likeUKIPLeaderW9	~	PID9UKIP		0.806	0.157	5.125	0.00000
11	likeUKIPLeaderW9	~	likeLibDemLeaderW9		-0.042	0.022	-1.881	0.060
12	likeUKIPLeaderW9	~	AgeW1		0.004	0.005	0.895	0.371
13	likeUKIPLeaderW9	~	likeUKIPLeaderW7		0.330	0.052	6.294	0
14	likeUKIPLeaderW8				0.031	0.208	0.148	0.882
15	likeUKIPLeaderW8	~	likeUKIPLeaderW7	a3	0.890	0.020	43.811	0
16	likeUKIPLeaderW8	~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		0.025	0.024	1.017	0.309
17	likeUKIPLeaderW8	~	AgeW1		0.007	0.004	1.691	0.091
18	likeUKIPLeaderW8	~	PID8UKIP		0.937	0.181	5.175	0.00000
19	likeUKIPLeaderW10	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW10		3.878	0.235	16.487	0
20	likeUKIPLeaderW9	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW9		2.201	0.184	11.941	0
21	likeUKIPLeaderW8	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW8		2.354	0.224	10.514	0
22	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW10		8.332	0		
23	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	AgeW1		-4.546	0		
24	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	PID10UKIP		-0.152	0		
25	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW7		-2.309	0		
26	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	PID9UKIP		-0.148	0		
27	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW9		5.857	0		
28	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		5.155	0		
29	likeLibDemLeaderW10	~~	PID8UKIP		-0.197	0		
30	AgeW1	~~	AgeW1		225.904	0		
31	AgeW1	~~	PID10UKIP		0.248	0		
32	AgeW1	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW7		0.791	0		
33	AgeW1	~~	PID9UKIP		0.060	0		
34	AgeW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW9		-6.424	0		
35	AgeW1	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		-3.170	0		
36	AgeW1	~~	PID8UKIP		-0.229	0		
37	PID10UKIP	~~	PID10UKIP		0.064	0		
38	PID10UKIP	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW7		0.366	0		
39	PID10UKIP	~~	PID9UKIP		0.043	0		
40	PID10UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW9		-0.138	0		
41	PID10UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		-0.125	0		
42	PID10UKIP	~~	PID8UKIP		0.047	0		

43	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	likeUKIPLeaderW7		11.751	0		
44	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	PID9UKIP		0.334	0		
45	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW9		-1.495	0		
46	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		-0.380	0		
47	likeUKIPLeaderW7	~~	PID8UKIP		0.475	0		
48	PID9UKIP	~~	PID9UKIP		0.069	0		
49	PID9UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW9		-0.167	0		
50	PID9UKIP	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		-0.123	0		
51	PID9UKIP	~~	PID8UKIP		0.052	0		
52	likeLibDemLeaderW9	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW9		7.734	0		
53	likeLibDemLeaderW9	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		5.443	0		
54	likeLibDemLeaderW9	~~	PID8UKIP		-0.172	0		
55	likeLibDemLeaderW8	~~	likeLibDemLeaderW8		7.148	0		
56	likeLibDemLeaderW8	~~	PID8UKIP		-0.107	0		
57	PID8UKIP	~~	PID8UKIP		0.083	0		
58	likeLibDemLeaderW10				3.412	0		
59	AgeW1				34.907	0		
60	PID10UKIP				0.069	0		
61	likeUKIPLeaderW7				3.461	0		
62	PID9UKIP				0.074	0		
63	likeLibDemLeaderW9				3.688	0		
64	likeLibDemLeaderW8				3.735	0		
65	PID8UKIP				0.092	0		
66	IndirectW8onW10	:=	a* a2	IndirectW8onW10	0.203	0.036	5.699	0
67	TotalW8onW10	:=	b+(a* a2)	TotalW8onW10	0.321	0.049	6.558	0
68	IndirectW7onW10	:=	(a* a2* a3)	IndirectW7onW10	0.181	0.032	5.691	0
69	TotalW7onW10	:=	b2+(IndirectW7onW10)	TotalW7onW10	0.372	0.052	7.199	0
70	likeUKIPLeaderW10	r2	likeUKIPLeaderW10		0.561			
71	likeUKIPLeaderW9	r2	likeUKIPLeaderW9		0.823			
72	likeUKIPLeaderW8	r2	likeUKIPLeaderW8		0.812			

Model Output Appendix 10: 2005 – 2010 Multilevel model on change in leadership evaluations

Multilevel Model Results 2005-2010 BES Panel (Nine Waves)

	Dependent variable:		
	Labour Model	Conservative Model	Liberal Democrat Model
	(1)	(2)	(3)
GenderFemale	0.001 (0.010)	0.014 (0.009)	0.006 (0.009)
LabourPartyIDYes	0.116*** (0.011)		
ConservativePartyIDYes		-0.024** (0.011)	
LDPartyIDYes			-0.031** (0.014)
partyIdStrengthFairly strongly	0.060*** (0.012)	0.084*** (0.012)	-0.032*** (0.012)
partyIdStrengthNot very strongly	0.083*** (0.013)	0.089*** (0.013)	-0.032** (0.014)
partyIdStrengthDon't know	0.092** (0.045)	0.013 (0.045)	-0.048 (0.049)
scale(AgeInW1)	-0.024*** (0.005)	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)
AttentiontoPolitics	-0.015*** (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	0.008*** (0.002)
GEvoteChangeYes			0.018** (0.009)
ChangePartyIdYes	0.040*** (0.010)	0.038*** (0.010)	0.021** (0.010)
InfluenceonPolitics	0.012*** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)
ConLeaderChangeLog	0.055*** (0.007)		0.070*** (0.007)
LabLeaderChangeLog		0.053*** (0.007)	0.066*** (0.007)
LDLeaderChangeLog	0.060*** (0.006)	0.071*** (0.007)	
LabourLeadershipChangeYes	0.322*** (0.033)		
LabourMostImpIssueYes	0.010 (0.011)		
ConservativeLeadershipChangeYes	0.069** (0.033)	0.308*** (0.031)	
ConservativeMostImpIssueYes		-0.008 (0.011)	
FinancialCrisisYes		0.150*** (0.032)	
MingCampbellNewYes			0.240*** (0.058)
NickCleggNewYes			0.110* (0.059)
LibDemMostImpIssueYes			-0.041** (0.017)
Constant	0.388*** (0.025)	0.448*** (0.024)	0.603*** (0.031)
Observations	22,200	22,200	20,640
Log Likelihood	-18,388.120	-18,522.220	-17,767.380
Akaike Inf. Crit.	36,812.250	37,080.430	35,572.760
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	36,956.390	37,224.570	35,723.530
Note:			*p**p***p<0.01